

BRUCE AUSTIN GIFFORD

(1927-1997)

MEMOIRS

Introduction:

These memoirs were written by my father between 1993 and 1997. He started writing them following the death of my mother. He completed volume one, a fascinating picture of a young boy growing up in Grimsby between the wars, and his life as a Military Policeman in Italy. Volume two (beginning with my parents' marriage) was, sadly, unfinished. It actually ends mid-sentence, which I find quite disturbing. Anyway, it is a personal, frank, and often hilarious account. I am amazed at how much he was able to recall. The 200 type-written sheets were scanned and are presented here exactly as written.

Peter J.H. Gifford

July 2nd 2009

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I was born on 28th October, 1927, at 63, Stirling Street, Grimsby, in that part of the town known as New Clee. The house was pulled down in the seventies. My parents were Harry Gifford and his wife Kate (Kitty) née Scrimshaw.

Harry was born in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, on 10th October 1893, his father was Austin Gifford who was born in Gillingham, Dorset, in the 1860's. His mother, who I can hardly remember, came from London and had been in service, her maiden name was Wardle. She was deaf and in poor health during the last years of her life. She died in 1938. Harry had two sisters, both older than he, May and Ethel.

I remember my grandfather, Austin Gifford, very well. He was bald, had a white, walrus moustache. He retained a broad Dorset accent all his life and I scarcely understood a word he said. He was a journeyman tailor by trade but worked as a master tailor in his own business. He and his wife had left Dorset in the 1880's to live in Doncaster which was a boom town because of its great railway works. They lived there until Austin decided to move to Grimsby which was another boom town owing to the great expansion of the fishing industry. This was in 1903. They lived in a terrace house overlooking Grant Thorold Park. I only visited it on a few occasions, it always smelt of gas which made me feel sick. They had a gramophone, the old wind-up type with a horn; I remember it playing a record of "Poor Butterfly".

Harry's sister, May, about whom I know almost nothing, married George Jackson during WW1. They had a daughter, Audrey, who was a few months older than me. She is my only cousin, a tall, plain girl with a round face and grey eyes. I have 'nt seen or heard of her since 1945. The Jacksons lived in Wilson Street, Cleethorpes and George Jackson was a bobbin-maker on Grimsby Docks. They went to live in Parkstone, Dorset, after WW2.

Ethel was a skilled dressmaker who had her own business: she never married and divided her time between Grimsby and Bourne-mouth. I have only one memory of Aunt Ethel but it is a very vivid one even after more than sixty years. My mother took me to visit Aunt Ethel one day when I was five or six. As a great treat I was allowed to sit looking out of the open bay window while the two ladies

discussed clothes. I heard Aunt Ethel, who was a slim, blonde woman in her early forties, ask "Will he mind?", and my mother reply "It's all right", whereupon my aunt proceeded to model the dress my mother had come to see. To do this, of course, she had to undress and dress twice. Little boys of five or six are not thought to be interested in such things: I was fascinated. To this day I can remember Aunt Ethel's high-heeled shoes, stockings, suspenders and brief white silk knickers. It is my only memory of her. I have memories of countless other people from my childhood, none of them anything like so vivid.

I once told Dorothy about this incident and she said it was quite normal, lady teachers had to be careful of their underwear as schoolboys, from nursery age upwards, would look up their skirts every chance they got. She was surprised that my mother, who was very worldly, hadn't realised this.

I should mention my cousin Audrey. Considering we were the same age and for some time lived two streets from each other, I remember very little of her. She was tall and plain with straight, bobbed hair. She grew up to be a shorthand typist and worked in a solicitor's office until she went with her parents to live in Dorset after the war.

Which brings me to my father, Harry. He was tall, over six feet, with grey eyes, a sallow complexion and dark hair which he began to lose in his thirties; by the time he was 45 in 1938 he was quite bald on top. He went to Welholme School in Grimsby and would have won a scholarship to the Municipal College, (later Wintringham Grammar School), if he had been coached. This was a common practice in those days, it cost a few shillings and schoolteachers made a handy addition to their earnings. For whatever reason, perhaps poverty or, more likely, meanness my father didn't pass and spent his senior schooldays at the elementary level, leaving school at 14 in 1907. I have no idea what became of him until he became a fish salesman at the age of 20 in 1913. I think he probably became an office boy or junior clerk with one of the fish merchants on the docks as this was the most common training ground to become a salesman. I remember seeing a photo of him in a dark suit with a stiff collar and tie, wearing a bowler hat, taken on the day he went to take his first orders. He seems to have had two main interests, motor bikes and cigarette cards. He had a motor bike at the start of WWI and a motor bike and sidecar (an American Indian bike) after the war. He drove this machine into a ditch descending Bully Hill

near Tealby, with my mother in the sidecar six months pregnant with me. Happily neither of them nor I was any the worse for the accident but Harry sold the motor bike and never had another. He started collecting cigarette cards as a boy and continued into the late thirties, by which time I was old enough to take the hobby over. The tobacco companies stopped issuing them at the start of WW2 and never started again when it was over. I still have his cards in envelopes in a cardboard box. Some of them are relatively valuable but the whole collection is not worth a lot by present day standards. He used to keep them in a wooden box with an inlaid pattern on the lid. I now realise that it was pure Art Nouveau and probably worth more than the cards today

He joined the Army in 1915, following the formation of the Motor Machine Gun Regiment of the Machine Gun Corps. The idea was that Vickers machine guns mounted on the sidecar of a motor cycle combination would enable devastating fire to be provided at short notice; the mobility of the machines might help to break the deadlock of trench warfare. This probably seemed like a good idea at the time but was hopelessly impractical as the bikes had no protection for the driver and gunner and were virtually useless off the road. I don't know if they went into action but I think it unlikely. This meant that a regiment of men, all of them motorists or motor cyclists were available to be re-mustered at the right time-early 1916-when the great British secret weapon, code-named "Tanks" was about to come into service. They were transferred en bloc and Harry spent the rest of his Army service in the Tank Corps.

He went to France in June 1916 and took part in the Somme, Passchendaele and Cambrai battles and the defence of Amiens following the German breakthrough of March 1918. He was wounded (by barbed wire) during the Autumn of 1918 and ended the war in hospital in Grimsby. He was promoted to full corporal but lost his stripes. I never heard any explanation for this or whether it was the only punishment he was awarded. He never said much about his experiences in the war, like most of the men who fought in France. He said that the early tanks were more dangerous to their crews than they were to the enemy and that several men were asphyxiated because of the lack of ventilation. Towards the end of the war the unit he was in was equipped with relatively small "Whippet" tanks which required small whippet-like men to crew them. His height disqualified him for these machines except in the capacity of "signaller". Each section of tanks was accompanied by this unfortunate who carried a basket of carrier-pigeons and walked behind the tanks, sending his pigeons with messages back to base, as ordered by the section commander. This can't have been as dangerous as it sounds, after all, he survived the war in one piece except for the barbed wire wound. He only ever said one thing that brought home to me the experiences he must have undergone. Some time during WW2, when I was in my early teens I made some foolish, boy's remark about the glory of fighting for one's country. "Yes", he said "you think a lot about glory when you're out in No Man's Land and the machine guns are going and you don't know which way to run".

I wish very deeply that I had known him better.

My mother, Kitty, was born on 15th November, 1892, in Grimsby her father was Frank Scrimshaw who was born in Cromwell, Notts. in the 1860's. Her mother was Mary Alice Scrimshaw (née Minns) born in the parish of St. Pancras, London, in July 1864. My mother had a brother, Frank, and a sister Evelynne, both older than she was.

Her father was a railway policeman on Grimsby docks, I know nothing about him except that he was a tall man and enjoyed the odd pint and flutter on the horses. He fell in the dock during a thick fog whilst he was on night duty and drowned. My mother was a baby in arms and never knew him, which makes me think his death must have been in 1893 or 1894. Her sister, Evelynne was a toddler; he had called her his "Little Love" which she rendered as "Lily Love". When she was shown her father's corpse lying in his open coffin she held her arms out to him and said "Speak to your Lily Love". At the inquest some charming individual asked whether his fall into the dock had been caused by drink. There was no evidence of this and a verdict of accidental death was returned.

Mary Alice Scrimshaw played a very large part in my childhood and boyhood, effectively she brought me up. I knew her as Gran and that is how I shall write of her. Her father was a clerk in the Town Clerk's office of the Borough of Marylebone and, by the standards of the time, an educated man. They lived in Waverley Terrace (?Street), off the Harrow Road but Gran must have been born elsewhere as Waverley Terrace wasn't in the parish of St. Pancras. I have intended for years to get a copy of her

birth certificate, one day I shall manage it.

Gran never spoke of her mother who must have died whilst she was an infant. She had at least one sister, older than she was, who got married and went to live in South Africa in 1880 when Gran was 16. The young couple asked Gran to go with them but she refused as she didn't want to be an unpaid nursemaid. This indicates that there were children to be looked after—we may have a number of South African relatives, perhaps speaking Afrikaans and marching with the A.W.B.

Gran's father seems to have been an extraordinary man with intellectual tastes. He read newspapers and took a weekly magazine called "The Budget", he had a microscope and a portable desk, he played chess, draughts and whist, all of which he taught Gran, who later taught me. He seems to have coped well with the upbringing of his family after his wife's death. He sent Gran to a Dame's school, run by two Russian ladies—the Misses Bontoff. They taught her to play the piano (her father had taught her to read and write) and to sew. One day one of the ladies struck her across the knuckles for making a mistake during piano practice. Gran stood up, said "I'm going home to my father" and never went back to the Misses Bontoff. She never said anything about any more schooling but she would have been 8 when the 1871 Education Act was passed and would have probably attended a Board School until she was 13.

Her father got a job as Clerk to the Town Clerk of Grimsby which must have just become a County Borough under the local government reforms of the 1880's. The only other thing I know about him is that he was buried in Doughty Road Cemetery. He

He must have been a remarkable man. I wish I had a photograph of him, perhaps I might still try to find something about him at Somerset House.

Gran met and married Frank Scrimshaw and, by 1892 had borne him three children. His death must have left her near-destitute. She had no relatives of her own in Grimsby but had to turn to Frank's family for help. He had an aunt, named Turner, living at 62 Stirling Street and they looked after the young widow and her children in many ways. For a time she did domestic work (charring) until the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company, who had employed her husband, came to her rescue by offering her a job as stewardess on the passenger ships they had started to run between Grimsby, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg. This was a good job, well paid, with good tips, secure and with a pension at the end of it. There is a photo of one of the vessels in the front of my little album. There is also a photo of Gran in her uniform posed in front of the wheel of the "City of Leeds" on the hub of which is imprinted "1903", which gives some idea of the date.

Before she could take the job, however, she had to make arrangements for her children. Places were found for Frank and Evelynne in the Hull Seamen's Orphan Asylum and Schools in the Spring Bank area of that city and the Turners agreed to have Kate (Kitty from now on) to live with them and be brought up as one of their family. They had a daughter Elizabeth ("Lizzie", elided to "Diddy" then to "Did", I always knew her as Aunt Did) who was the same age as Kitty. They were as close as sisters.

I have been vague as to dates because I have nothing to go on except a copy of "Tom Brown's Schooldays", presented by the Orphanage to Frank Scrimshaw of Class 3 on Founder's Day, 1899 for "Reading" during the past year. This could mean that he had completed the third year of school which would make him eight years old, ie probably born in 1891, the year before Kitty and quite likely the year after Evelynne. There was nothing unusual about this in Victorian times, the unusual thing was that they all survived infancy.

Gran worked as a stewardess, travelling between Grimsby or Harwich and the Continent until 1929, when she retired at the age of 65. This included the war years when the ships sailed to Rotterdam only, Holland being neutral. None of the vessels were sunk or attacked in any way; presumably it suited both sides to keep some form of communication going between them and to enable spies to travel back and forth. Gran was awarded the War Medal, Victory Medal and Mercantile Marine Medal for her service.

I believe she spent more time in Hamburg than anywhere else, apart from the war years. She spoke some German but no Dutch or French and took Kitty for holidays there. She never re-married although she had at least one admirer who was invited home for tea. For some reason the three children (? young people, I've no idea of the date) took a dislike to the man, deliberately behaved badly and were very rude to him, to the extent that he never called again and no further admirers were invited home.

Evelynne was trained as a seamstress by the orphanage and worked in that trade all her adult life, she was also taught to play the piano. I have the strong impression that she was

the most intelligent and literate of the brood

and in later times would have gone on to higher education. I don't think that Frank was as bright as his sisters. He had a pronounced cast in one eye, which must have been a disadvantage. He was tall and well-built and was keen on body-building. I remember a large photograph of him displaying his muscles, and a framed certificate from a man called Inch, a forerunner of Charles Atlas, which hung on Gran's living room wall. As for Kitty, if she had been born sixty years later she would have been a combination tearaway and raver. Living with the Turners at 62 Stirling Street she went to Bursar Street School in Cleethorpes and left in 1906, at the age of 13, to become a machinist at the Great Grimsby Coal Salt and Tanning Co. The family moved to the house next door-Sea View Cottage, no. 63, Stirling Street-in 1910. During the War she worked in Manchester and in Lincoln at Robey's Engineering Works as a welder making mines for use at sea. She joined the V.A.D's (Voluntary Aid Detachment), known in the army as "Victims Always Die", and did some nurse's training.

I've no idea what Evelynne did after leaving the Orphan Homes, I know she worked in Sheffield during WW1 and may have gone there in peacetime. She fell into the River Head at Grimsby during a fog and was rescued by a Swedish sea-captain who dived in and pulled her out. He called to see her several times afterwards and asked her to marry him, she refused. I remember a photo of him, he was a fine looking man with a black beard.

Frank trained as a cobbler but was not successful at the trade and became a docker. He joined the Territorial Army, serving in the 5th Lincolns. There is a history of the battalion during WW1 among our books. The battalion was in camp near Bridlington when the Germans invaded Belgium on 1st August, 1914, and was moved back to Headquarters at Grimsby to prepare for mobilisation, which took place on August 5th.

They spent the next week in Grimsby, being billeted in, among other places, South Parade and Canon Ainslie schools. The problems of mobilisation were complicated by the fact that the battalion was the only military force in the area and had, therefore, to provide guards to defend Grimsby Docks, the power station, the wireless station at Weelsby (I think this must be the one known in later years as Waltham Radio) and various other places, including digging slit trenches on the beach at Humberston. On 11th August they were relieved by the 5th Manchester Regt. and entrained for Belper in Derbyshire where they joined the rest of the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade. On the 15th the brigade with the rest of the Division, moved to Luton, then a sleepy Bedfordshire market town. There was no proper encampment or barracks so they were billeted in all sorts of places. Some lucky ones were billeted in private houses, the luckiest of all in a public house. Frank was one of these. It says a lot about him that he asked to be re-located as the sale of alcoholic liquor was against his principles.

The battalion stayed in Luton until 26th February, 1915, embarking for France the following day, being part of the 138th Brigade of the 46th (North Midland) Division. They ended up in the trenches of the Ypres Salient. At the same time the battalion was designated the 1st/5th Lincolns to distinguish it from the reserve battalion in England which was designated 2nd/5th.

They stayed in the area of Ypres until they were moved south in October 1915. The battle of Loos was over, the Army had sustained huge losses for little if any gain and the Territorial Divisions replaced the remnants of the Regular Army in that part of the Front.

The battalion went over the top during the afternoon of 13th

October to attack a German defensive position known as the Hohenzollern Redoubt, south of Loos. Frank was killed in action shortly afterwards. A German stick grenade landed near him; he picked it up to throw it back and it exploded in his hand, blowing him to pieces.

The telegram announcing his death was delivered to his home where there was nobody in; Gran was away at sea, Evelynne was working in Sheffield and Kitty was at work at the Coal Salt whence the telegraph boy was re-directed. On learning the news Kitty fainted and was taken to the house of one of her work-mates who lived nearby. I don't know how the news was conveyed to Gran, presumably some time later, or how she received it. By the Autumn of 1915 casualty lists were a daily item in the newspapers and the deaths of young men-sons, husbands, brothers, lovers were becoming increasingly familiar. Evelynne and Kitty rarely spoke of their brother although I remember Kitty remarking very late in her life that she often dreamt of him. Gran spoke of him often in my childhood, always referring to him as "Your Uncle Frank" and when I was very young, I remember her sometimes saying "you're Gran's man, the only little man Gran's got". I don't think she ever quite accepted his death. He had gone away to the war and hadn't come back. She hadn't seen him die, there had been no funeral, there was no grave. His Indian Clubs and dumb-bells were kept in a box for years and a large framed photograph of him hung on the wall of Gran's living room throughout my childhood. She always remembered his birthday. I remember

her saying "your Uncle Frank would have been 45 today", I am ashamed to say that I have no idea of the date.

Kitty went away to work on munitions in Manchester and then Lincoln, where she lodged in Carr Street, near the racecourse, with a family called Wells. I have the strong impression that she had a good time. She was pretty, lively and could look after herself. She had met Harry on the promenade at Cleethorpes when he was home on leave, being attracted by his Machine Gun Corps uniform with its brown boots, brown leather leggings and bronze cap badge, which made him look like an officer. They married in November 1919, at Grimsby Registry Office, not long after he was demobilised from the Army. On the marriage certificate he is described as "fish salesman" and she as "stewardess". They went to London for the honeymoon and went to see "Chu Chin Chow, a popular musical comedy featuring the song "Chin Chin Chinaman", one of the first songs I can remember singing.

Kitty had started work as a stewardess with Gran not long after the War, when passenger services resumed to Antwerp and Hamburg, and kept the job until a few weeks before her confinement. This period included the time of Germany's great inflation when an English pound was worth millions of marks. A more astute or acquisitive person could have made a lot of money buying antiques and objets d'art in Germany to sell or keep as an investment in England. I have an idea that, as in Lincoln, she had a good time, spending her pounds in the night-clubs and entertainments of St. Pauli. Gran had more sense and brought home some fine china, including several pieces of Delft ware. It's only in quite recent years that I've realised that that the mantle-piece ornaments which were used as containers for small odds

and ends at Gran's were brown Delft. About the only thing Kitty brought home was the eight-day Westminster-chime clock which sits on the mantelpiece as I write. I learned to tell the time on it.

Harry returned to work as a fish salesman, moved on to become the foreman in a fish smokehouse, was fired and became a bookie's runner, then the steward of the Unity Club in Garibaldi Street in Grimsby. I don't know where they lived during these years, they can't have spent all that much time together and I suspect that 63 Stirling Street was "home" for most of the time, which is why Kitty was confined there and I was born early on a Friday morning.

I can just remember being three years old at the Unity Club and I think we must have lived there. In late 1930 or early 1931 Harry moved up in the world, getting the job of steward at the Cyclists' Club in Hainton Square. The Unity Club was little more than an out of hours drinking place and base for street bookies in those days before betting-shops were legalised. The Cyclists' was in a different class altogether. By that time it had nothing to do with cycling but had become one of the foremost "gentlemens'" clubs in the town and its membership comprised mainly fish merchants, business and professional men. There were no lady members. I remember it well. The living accommodation was a small two bedroomed flat on the ground floor with a living-room and kitchen combined. The large clubroom was on the first floor. It had a bar and three full-sized billiard tables, comfortable chairs and tables, scoreboards and racks for billiard cues. Beside each billiard table a cord hung down from a pulley on the ceiling, holding a cube of blue chalk for the cue tips. Considering the early age at which I was introduced to billiards

and snooker it's a wonder that I was never much good at either game. I remember Harry showing me how to make a bridge for the cue and explaining what a cannon was. In those days billiards was much more popular than snooker although there was a full set of snooker balls for each table, kept in strange shaped baskets that looked like large bottles with narrow necks. On the second floor was the Committee Room and an inner sanctum type of room for the Chairman and Secretary. On the roof there was a flagstaff and a penny-farthing bicycle as a reminder of the original purpose of the club. There was a flight of steps from the street, leading to the main door on which was written in large gilded letters "Gt. Grimsby Cyclists' Club Estd. 1877". There was a small garden at the side of the building with a patch of grass. Next door was a large, detached house belonging to the Misses Fletcher. It had a large crab-apple tree and I used to eat the windfalls (whatever happened to crab apples?, they had a distinctive taste. I haven't seen one for years).

My parents must have had difficulty in taking care of the toddler I was in those early days at the Cyclists'. They were both involved in the running of the club, Kitty had to clean as well as help behind the bar. The hours were long, from midday to late evening with only Sunday off. I can just remember a girl or girls(?) being employed as my nanny, although the word was never used. This came to an end for me one evening not long after my fourth birthday in October 1931. I remember being alone in the living room of the flat and being frightened. It was late, after my bedtime, and I didn't know where Kitty was. Suddenly Harry came in and got my coat and hat. He asked where my waistcoat was and I told him that I didn't wear a waistcoat, only

a jersey. He found it and pulled it on over my head. His hands were trembling so much he could hardly manage but somehow he dressed me. The next thing I remember is being at Gran's house, 23, Manchester Street, Cleethorpes, that same evening. I have no idea where Kitty was or what she was doing..

This was a traumatic incident and has had an adverse effect on my character, I don't think I've ever forgiven "them" for rejecting me without explanation. I didn't learn the reason for the upheaval in my life until years later, when I was almost grown up. In the Autumn of 1931 Harry went for a few days holiday to Blackpool, there was no possibility of Kitty going with him as she had to stay and look after the Club. I remember his return from holiday because he brought me a present—a clockwork fire engine with lights and a bell that rang as it went along. Some time afterwards, being unwell, he went to the doctor who diagnosed syphilis, contracted from a Blackpool prostitute. He had no alternative but to tell Kitty, my banishment followed, presumably to avoid the risk of infection. In those days before Penicillin syphilis was incurable, such treatments as there were reduced the many side-effects of the disease but never eradicated it. It probably had a strong bearing on his early death.

I lived with Gran for almost two years, a very long time to a little boy. There was nothing strange to me about living at Gran's house, which I had often visited and stayed at. I had some fine toys there, a large set of wooden bricks and a fort with a collection of Britain's toy soldiers, mostly cavalry in dress uniforms. I believe, however, that I was seriously disturbed. I can remember talking about "Before, when I was three". I can't remember what I talked about but Gran used to say that I was

"romancing". I was also said to be "sulky". Aunt Evelynne lived with Gran; she was in her early forties, had never married and worked at the Brighowgate Childrens' Homes in Grimsby as a seamstress. She had a man friend whose name was Bert Rockett. They had met at a tram stop in 1922; he was the general handyman at the Homes and may have had something to do with Evelynne working there (or perhaps vice versa). He had been in the trenches during WW1, serving in the 11th Hussars and later, when the British generals finally got it into their heads that cavalry stood no chance against modern machine guns and artillery, in the Royal West Kents. He was wounded near Dickebusch in the Ypres Salient being struck in the back of the neck by a piece of shrapnel. It must have been a serious wound and he was lucky to survive. He had a deep scar where the wound had healed and I remember the shape of it, like a letter Y on its side. He and Evelynne never married, mainly because he had to support his mother and sister. He lived in one of the then new council houses in Second Avenue Grimsby and used to cycle across the town to visit Evelynne. Like her he should have gone on to higher education. He understood electricity and motor cars and was a keen wireless enthusiast. Not long after I went to live at Gran's the land lord (like most people, Gran rented her house), installed electricity in place of gas for lighting and Uncle Bert brought a wireless set he had made from plans in the "Wireless World" magazine. This meant we had to have an aerial, a wire from the set stretching the length of the back garden to the top of a pole which seemed very tall to me but was probably about fifteen feet. Nearly every house had one, it was a status symbol as TV aerials became in the early fifties.

I don't think I was a naughty child so much as wilful and disturbed (a term not invented at that time). There are a few

photos of me in those days, not one of them shows me smiling- always with the same sullen expression. The thing I liked best was to accompany Gran on her trip every Tuesday to the General Post Office in Victoria Street to collect her pension. Actually she had two, the Old Age Pension and an occupational pension from Trinity House, who administered a scheme for seafarers. The journey was made by tram, all the way from our nearest stop in Grimsby Road, near the corner of Elliston Street, to the Old Market Place. I loved the trams. They ran from the Old Market, down Victoria Street, round Lock Hill, along Cleethorpe Road past Riby Square, across Park Street into Cleethorpes, along Grimsby Road up Isaac's Hill, along the Kingsway to the High Cliff, where the terminus was. Most of the trams were double-deckers with covered tops but there were a few open topped cars. The fronts of the trams were open, there was no windscreen to protect the driver who also had to stand and face the elements as well as drive, no seat being provided. For a little boy to travel on the upper deck in the open front of a tram was a great thrill. There is a similar car in the LT Museum and at least one picture in the albums. Most of the trams belonged to Grimsby Corporation and were painted maroon and cream, the depot was where the existing bus depot is in Victoria Street. A number of trams, however, belonged to the Great Grimsby Street Tramways Company which itself belonged to the Provincial Tramways Company. These cars were painted emerald green and cream and had a depot in Pelham Road Cleethorpes. There were also the Immingham trams which ran from Corporation Bridge, along Corporation Road and Gilbey Road into what was then open country to Immingham. They were long single-deck bogie cars, similar to American trams of the time painted in a sort of teak finish, like the carriages of the LNER which owned them. To complete the complicated transport system

in the two towns there were also single decker trolleybuses which ran from Riby Square, down Freeman Street and Hainton Avenue to Weelsby Road and both single and double decker motor buses, operated by both Grimsby and Cleethorpes Corporations, the Cleethorpes ones being painted dark blue and cream.

Gran's pension must have made a big contribution to our finances. She and Evelynne had taken 23 Manchester Street in 1929, when Gran retired on reaching the age of 65. Evelynne's wage from the Homes was probably about £2 per week, my parents must have paid for my keep and Gran's pensions probably amounted to £1-50, a total of around £4 per week which in those days was the sort of wage a skilled artisan might have kept a family on. We were not rich but not poor either.

At some time in 1932 I acquired a fairy cycle, a small two-wheeled machine with solid tyres, a real bicycle. I don't know where it came from, it wasn't new so it couldn't have been a Christmas present, I have a feeling that it may have come from the Brighowgate Homes. I remember references to the destructive ways of the children and the beautiful toys donated to them which were smashed. I think that several of these toys found their way to 23 Manchester Street in Uncle Bert's saddle-bag, I certainly got a Hornby tank engine and a number of William books that way when I was older. I soon learned to ride the fairy cycle and went all over on it, keeping to the pavement, of course, even in those unrestricted days four year olds weren't allowed on the road. From then until early middle age I always had a bike of some sort; I would have one now if we lived anywhere but London.

During this time, living at Gran's, I saw little of my parents. Kitty came for an hour or so most afternoons to talk to Gran and read Pip, Squeak and Wilfred to me from the Daily Mirror

but I only saw Harry at weekends. He had bought a car, a Morris 8 steel-bodied saloon JV1914. It wasn't the first, he had had a fabric-bodied Morris 8 which I can only just remember, but was well thought of and may have been new or nearly so. On fine Sundays he would take Kitty and me for a drive in the afternoon along the A18 to Brigg, or the Low Road to Mablethorpe. Sometimes we called to see a Mr and Mrs Gilliatt who kept an inn at Wrawby and were friends of Harry's. The names of the villages we passed through are very evocative—Kirmington, North Thoresby, Marsh Chapel North Somercotes, Saltfleet, Theddlethorpe St. Helen.. I remember being at Mr. & Mrs Gilliatt's one Sunday afternoon and Mr. Gilliatt playing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "There's a Long Long Trail A'Winding" on the piano. Kitty and Mrs. Gilliatt both cried. I think it must have been an anniversary of some kind. We were still in the shadow of WW1 and memories of its horrors and the men who had died were still vivid. The grown-ups must have talked of the war because I remember to this day looking out of the window at the sun setting amidst golden clouds and wondering if that was where Uncle Frank was.

Manchester Street was quite near the sands, the other side of the railway lines to Cleethorpes station, reached by crossing Fuller Street Bridge or, further away but better sands, over the level crossing at the end of Suggitt's Lane. This wasn't a level crossing in the ordinary sense as the main gate never opened and the wicket gate for pedestrians never closed. On Saturdays or Sundays in the summer it was a good place to watch the trainloads of trippers coming in to Cleethorpes on the "Specials", mainly LNER but often LMS and on one glorious occasion a magnificent train drawn by an engine with a gold rim round its smokestack and carriages in the chocolate and cream livery

of the Great Western Railway. The railway played a large part in life in towns like Grimsby and Cleethorpes, both of which owed their existence as more than isolated villages to the coming of the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway in the 1840's. The trains were all pulled by steam engines and the sounds of steam escaping, the pounding of the cylinders of passenger trains getting up speed after leaving Cleethorpes station, the train whistles and the clank, clank of wagons being shunted were a constant background noise to the life of the towns. The sidings from the docks extended as far as Manchester Street, there was constant activity and a panorama of coal trucks at the end of the street. Gran knew quite a lot about railways and could answer most of my questions, if she couldn't Uncle Bert could. I think I was lucky to have four people, Gran, Kitty, Evelynne and Uncle Bert who were intelligent, travelled, had a wide general knowledge and were patient enough to explain things that puzzled me.

I was not allowed to go on the sands by myself but sometimes I managed to sneak over Fuller Street bridge without Gran catching me. I did this one day, wearing a new pair of sandals. The tide was almost in so I took off the sandals, left them on the sand, and went for a paddle. When I returned the sandals were gone. I burst into tears and started running home, to be met at the foot of the bridge by Gran, who frog-marched me home. I never went on the sands by myself again until I was much older.

There is a folk-memory now of the golden days of the thirties when people were poor but honest and nobody ever locked the back door. There was certainly less theft, particularly in working class areas, because there was much less to steal. People

seldom had anything of value in their houses. There were no such things as Televisions, video recorders or hi fi systems, wireless sets were becoming common but were often home made, like ours, and much less portable than such things are to-day. A big factor was fear of authority. Punishments were much more severe than they are now, murderers were hanged, crimes involving violence could be punished by strokes of the birch or cat of nine tails, ie flogging, as well as a prison sentence "with hard labour" which meant exactly what it said, long hours of hard, often pointless work breaking stones or sewing mailbags. This fear of authority went right through the working class. Anyone in uniform - policemen, tram conductors, park keepers, railway ticket collectors, were assumed to have wide powers to impose punishment particularly to have one locked up or, in the case of naughty children, sent to Borstal. Trespassing was considered a great crime by children. Things on private property were left alone but things carelessly left about in the public domain, eg my sandals, were fair game. They were probably taken by "slum kids" from the dock area of Grimsby who sometimes roamed along the sands and were greatly feared by the respectable working-class children such as me. I was lucky that they ran off with their prize and left me alone.

In those days Grimsby depended absolutely on the fishing industry for its prosperity. The industry was organised in such a way that large numbers of its workers were employed on a casual basis, dock labourers from day to day and trawlermen from voyage to voyage. This meant that men who got on the wrong side of the skipper or whose face didn't fit were usually the last to be taken on, often not taken on at all. To be unemployed was a disaster as it meant that families could be reduced to genuine

grinding poverty. Such benefits as there were provided a life only just above starvation level. The "slum kids" were dirty, ragged and often barefoot: they smelled and often had close-cropped hair. We all knew what that meant—they were "chatty" with head lice and nits as well as lice and fleas. This wasn't peculiar to Grimsby, the underclass in all areas of the country were in a similar state. People in "county" villages who took in evacuees at the start of WW2 were often startled to find that their new residents from working class areas of industrial towns were infested and seemed to think that it was the normal condition. I don't remember ever having head lice or nits but I remember the occasional flea. These were much commoner than they are now and could easily be picked up on a bus or tram or, more likely, in a cinema, several known as "fleapits". I do remember occasional large itchy spots on my feet which were referred to as "heat spots" or "sugar bumps". They were almost certainly bites from bedbugs which were common and accounted for the occasional smell of paraffin in the bedroom.

Gradually, under Gran's tuition, I learned to read and by my fifth birthday could read quite well. For some reason Kitty assumed that, since it was the day I became liable to attend school, she should take me to the nearest school to enroll in the middle of term. She walked me to Elliston Street Infants, on the other side of Grimsby Road, to be told by the head teacher that I couldn't be admitted until the beginning of the next term, after Christmas. Kitty had to take me back home again, crying my eyes out. This must have been the only time I ever cried because I **couldn't** go to school. In due course the start of the Spring Term 1933 arrived and I was duly enrolled. There was some confusion at the start as I had to go to Reynolds Street Infants, quite a long way away. I think I can only have gone there for

a short time before being transferred back to Elliston Street Infants. I don't remember much about those first terms at school, I could read, which must have had some effect. I got into trouble because I made a mess of cutting a picture out of a magazine and (this still rankles) was rapped over the knuckles with a ruler because I drew a picture of a bear with a round face. Kitty decided I should wear a brown beret to school, which made my life a misery. Berets were not to become part of soldiers' uniform (apart from the Tank Corps who were never seen in Cleethorpes) until WW2: they were worn by girls. I suffered accordingly. After a week or two of moaning Kitty gave in and bought me a navy blue school cap with a peak. She said it made me look like an institution child but it made me happy, particularly when Aunt Evelynne sewed an Elliston Street badge on the front.

I remember the last day of the Summer Term, 1933, when we broke up for the Summer holidays. In those days there were no school dinners so we had to go home for lunch. I remember eating an orange and drinking a glass of milk. At the end of afternoon school we went into the hall for an assembly before the holiday. I was standing on the left of the front row, I felt terrible. Suddenly I knew what was about to happen. I turned to a teacher who was standing against the wall and said "I'm going to be sick" and I was; all over the floor. I was taken home by an older child and never went back to Elliston Street Infants.

It had been decided that I was to attend the Preparatory Department of Grimsby Municipal College, where I spent the next eleven years, to the end of my schooldays, by which time it had become Wintringham Grammar School. The Prep Department was housed in a former chapel at the corner of East Marsh Street and Hainton Avenue, just across Hainton Square from the Cyclists' Club so I was once again uprooted, this time to live with my parents.

From then to late 1940 my time was divided between my parents home and Gran's, where I spent week-ends and holidays. This was a good arrangement as my toys, fairy cycle and friends were at Gran's and there was no one to play with in Hainton Square.

During the school holidays in August 1933 Kitty took me for a week to the small seaside town of Filey, on the Yorkshire coast. Harry drove us there in the Morris 8, a great feat in those days when car journeys much over 20 miles were regarded as an adventure with punctures and breakdowns a regular occurrence. I played on the small beach and was taken on a trip to a rocky promontory called Filey Brig in a large rowing boat.

I started at Wintringham in September, 1933. In many ways it was a step down from Elliston Street which was quite a modern building with adequate facilities. There had been no attempt to adapt the former chapel for use as a school. The two lowest classes were in two small rooms, the top class in the large assembly hall, where we all took part in PT. There was no proper playground and the boys' lavatories were disgraceful, I can recall their stench now. The teachers, however, coped with the difficulties very well. They were three ladies—Miss Horton, who had the reception class, Miss Shipman and Miss Sharp, who was the senior mistress and had the top class. The children were nicer than those at Elliston Street and I soon made several friends, boys and girls, several of whom I passed through the school with and two of whom, Jack Moore and Ken Francis, I retained as friends into middle age. I am sorry to say that I lost touch with them both in the sixties. The lessons made a lot more sense and I have the feeling that they were a lot more academic. I felt a lot happier with life than I had at Elliston Street, I am sure

it must have been worth the £2-16s termly fee.

At the Club I had another set of toys to add to those kept at Gran's. I had a large model of a London bus, a toy typewriter a pedal car and a toy school desk. I also had a beautiful clock-work model motor boat which I think was made by Hornby and may have originated at the Brighowgate Homes. I took it to Gran's and was sometimes taken to Sydney Park, not far away, to sail it on the pond. I think my parents were happy enough together, they must have got over Harry's misfortune by this time although he must have undergone treatment for his disorder for the rest of his life. I imagine that they had no illusions about each other. The years before I was born when Kitty spent most of her life away must have given both of them opportunity to misbehave. Harry was tall, well-built and dressed smartly in a suit, collar and tie, polished brown shoes and a fawn Trilby hat. I think Kitty was probably pretty as a young woman and had a vivacious, lively manner which made her attractive to men. Her best feature was probably her large, wide-set dark brown eyes, which she and Evelynne had inherited from Gran and which she passed on to me and I to you.

About this time Kitty started to take me to the cinema. There was no school on Wednesday afternoons and we often went to the Savoy (later the Gaumont then the Odeon now a MacDonald's) in Victoria Street. Another cinema was the Tivoli in Duncombe Street, the nearest one to the Club, where I saw the early musicals "Gold Diggers of 1933", "42nd Street", "Flying down to Rio" and "Top Hat". It was destroyed in an air raid in 1942. Harry sometimes took me to the Prince of Wales in Freeman Street, the town's

variety theater, perhaps a cut above a music hall. "Variety" was the English version of the American "Vaudeville" and was slowly dying because of the increasing popularity of the cinema following the invention of the talkies. I remember seeing the young George Formby and a blonde Scottish girl called Billie Houston whose act included wandering down the aisle and chatting up likely-looking men in the audience. This included Harry with whom she flirted and gave me the chance to see heavy stage make up at close hand. It was a vintage time for popular music and I think that the songs I heard in the film musicals and on the variety stage gave me a taste for it which has lasted all my life, has given me great pleasure and, in the last year or so very great sadness.

I read somewhere that of all the senses, the sense of smell is most closely linked to memory. A smell can recall the past far better than sight, hearing or touch can. Someday somebody will invent a means of recording and replaying smells, I wish it was available now even though my sense of smell is much reduced. Living in Hainton Square I was close to the sources of two of the most pleasant smells in a town renowned for them - Ticklers Jam Factory and Hewitt's Brewery, both in Pasture Street. It was a pleasure to be in that street when Tickler's were making marmalade, only exceeded by the most beautiful smell of all Hewitt's Brewery. If beer tasted as delicious as it smells in the making we should all be alcoholics. In the same district were the Electricity Works, which gave off a curious metallic smell, and the horrid smell of the Gas Works which covered a wide area. As you travelled up Freeman Street towards Riby Square the different smells of the docks became prevalent; Cleethorpe Road had them all. Starting at Lock Hill with the smell of deal

from the timber yards (now under the roundabout at the end of the A180) there was a permanent scent of coal-smoke and steam from the large number of trains that passed to and fro over the busiest level-crossing in the world..At Riby Square the smell of fish overlaid everything else until,further down towards Humber street,several fish smokehouses could be detected followed by the "oilskin" smell of a cod liver oil factory.There were also the smells of home.Gran used to polish the lino with red "Mansion" Polish,she used to blacklead the grate and polish the brass fender and fire irons with Brasso.The Cyclists' club Room always smelled of tobacco smoke and the furniture polish which Harry used on the billiard tables,which he was very proud of.School had its own smell composed of chalk,ink,paper and children.There were two other smells which provided a general background to everything else.The main one was coal smoke from house chimneys,sometimes mixed with wood smoke in the early mornings as domestic fires were lit.Every so often this was supplemented by the pungent smell of a chimney on fire,considered to be an offence which was punishable by a fine of 5/-.One last smell was that of horse shit.Although motor and steam lorries were on the increase a large part of short-haul goods traffic and local deliveries was carried by horse and cart.Gran's groceries from the Co-Op were delivered every Thursday in this way. She used to keep the stale bread crusts for the horse who used to put his front hooves on the pavement outside her house and refused to move until Gran or I gave him his bread.

It was during this time-1933/34 that Grimsby Town won the championship of the old Second Division and moved into the First. . Even Harry and Uncle Bert,neither of whom were football fans were caught up in the excitement and I remember the family listening to the football results on the wireless on the Saturday

when the match was played that gave them the championship and cheering when they heard that Town had won. It started a loyalty which has lasted all my life. I haven't been to Blundell Park for almost forty years or seen Grimsby play since the mid seventies when I saw them at Hartlepool and I have lost a lot of the interest I had in football generally but I still look out for Town's results, I'm pleased when they win and sorry when they lose.

In May, 1935, Harry was appointed manager of the Lincoln Arms, a large pub in Riby Square, on the corner of Freeman Street and Cleethorpe Road. Before taking up this position Harry and Kitty took the opportunity to take a holiday together. We now had a Ford 8, maroon with fawn cloth upholstery, and went touring in it to the South West of England. The things I noticed most were the trams and buses in the towns we passed through or stayed at, principally Bath and Bournemouth. I think I must have been taken to see Gifford relatives in the area, but I can't remember them.

The Lincoln Arms was very different from the Cyclists' Club. It was a large, two-storey building, dating from the 1860's and occupied the whole of the first block on Freeman Street, between Cleethorpe Road and Strand Street. The living accommodation was on the first floor. There were two large bedrooms, a small attic bedroom, a large drawing room, full of handsome Victorian and Edwardian furniture (one piece of which, a round chair, sits in the hall at this minute) a large living room cum kitchen a room called "the office" and a sinister room with no windows and no electric light which served no useful purpose and which frightened me. There were also three rooms along the Strand Street wing of the building, which were probably intended originally

to be staff bedrooms. One of them became my playroom, the others were used for storage after the previous manager's junk was cleared out. He had run the pub since 1910 and had accumulated some interesting things, including three bolt-action rifles, a pogo stick and a number of bound volumes of an illustrated magazine called "The Day's Doings", dating from the 1870's. I found the rifles, which were covered with dust, and quickly discovered how to operate the bolt which enabled the trigger to be pulled with a satisfying click. I searched the room, hoping to find some bullets, and was about to attack some likely-looking boxes when Kitty found me, called Harry who took the rifles and boxes away, and locked the room up until it could be cleared, which it was a few days later. They left me the pogo stick and bound volumes but I never saw the rifles or boxes again. I've often wondered what was in the boxes and whether they found any other interesting things.

The public parts of the Lincoln Arms were very different from the Cyclists' Club. There were no billiard tables or any of the trappings of a gentlemen's club, the sole purpose of the place was to sell beer, wine, spirits, cigarettes, cigars and Smith's Crisps in as great a volume as possible. There was a large bar and four "rooms" with a strict price (and social) difference between them. Women were not allowed in the bar and in only one of the rooms—the one known as the "singing room", which was the lowest on the social scale and the only one where serious fights took place. The customers in the rooms were served by barmaids, one to each room and one in the bar. Several of them were "good lasses" and stayed at the Lincoln for a long time two or three becoming family friends. The difference between

the good and bad lasses was their trustworthiness. In a busy pub it was easy for a barmaid to avoid paying her takings into the till in the bar. There were ways of spotting this and barmaids would suddenly cease to appear, soon being replaced by a newcomer. I believe that a certain amount of fiddling was condoned, it was the ones that were greedy and overdid it who got the elbow. I think also that discreet prostitution on the part of a barmaid was winked at, after all, what she did outside opening hours was her own business. I didn't learn this, of course, until I was grown up. I was amazed when Kitty told me that two of the "good" girls had supplemented their wages in this way, I remembered them both as pretty girls who would chatter to the lonely little boy I was then and were sometimes invited to tea. I wondered what they had charged and wished I had been a few years older.

At the start of the Autumn Term, 1935, the Prep. Department was moved to Eleanor Street, the site of the rest of the school. A large single-storey wooden building had been erected on spare land adjacent to the Lower School, it had three large classrooms clean toilets and proper cloakrooms: the wooden walls were covered in sheets of asbestos, painted cream, as a fire safety feature pointed out proudly to visitors. There was also a large playground paved with asphalt which did our knees no end of good. Another change was a new school uniform, the main feature of which was a navy blue cap with the town coat of arms on the front and a broad orange ring around the crown. One side-effect of this cap (beret for the girls) was to make us easily identifiable to the local kids who called us "College Bulldogs", God knows where the name came from. We learned to go about in groups as far as possible and to keep to the main streets where

there were plenty of adults about. To go alone down a quiet back street was to invite trouble. A number of yobs (the term wasn't used in Grimsby at that time) would appear and surround you. They rarely touched you but prevented you from proceeding and behaved in a generally menacing way, often snatching your cap and throwing it in a puddle or one of the ubiquitous piles of dog or horse shit, then chasing you away shouting "College Bulldog". This attitude was not confined to children. I travelled to and from school on the trolleybus from Riby Square to Hainton Square. The bus conductors became familiar figures and were usually good-natured and friendly. One day when the conductor collected my fare ($\frac{1}{2}d = \frac{1}{4}p$) I made some sort of wisecrack at which the man blew up in my face, raving about kids whose parents had too much money, going to snob schools (Wintringham!) cheeky little sods who needed to be taught manners and the inevitable "College Bulldogs". At this point he must have realised that he, a grown man, was making a complete fool of himself by ranting at an eight year old child in front of passengers, any one of whom might report him to the Transport Manager. He turned away and left me alone. I suppose he was having a bad day and I got the benefit of it. I wasn't particularly affected by the incident, it was no worse than the rebukes I was used to receiving from school-teachers from time to time. As I got off the bus at Riby Square I noticed an elderly man speaking to the conductor. A few days later I encountered him again, as I paid my fare he apologised for his behaviour, saying he had been poorly. I am quite sure now that he had been told who my father was; the manager of the Lincoln Arms was in a good position to cause all kinds of trouble to a bus conductor, ranging from having him beaten up to getting him the sack. In fact I don't think I told my parents about the

affair which taught me a useful lesson-that children should always mistrust adults not closely related to them and never say any more to an adult than they had to.

In Spring, 1937, Gran moved from 23, Manchester Street to live in a house at the back of the Post Office at the corner of Fuller Street and Grimsby Road, less than a quarter of a mile away. Nobody knows a house as well as a child does. To this day I can move through the rooms of 23 Manchester Street in my mind and hear the familiar sounds-the creak of the living room door the kettle singing on the hob, the sounds of the railway, the flapping of washing on the line on a Monday-and smell the familiar smells. The new house was far superior; it had a living room, pantry, kitchen/scullery on the ground floor, a large drawing-room, two large bedrooms and a bathroom with lavatory on the first floor. Perhaps its best feature was a hot water system

which is commonplace now but was unusual in working-class districts in those days and also in such places as the Cyclists' Club which had some kind of gas heated geyser in the flat and club-room toilet but no proper hot water system. Gran's house at 23 Manchester Street didn't even have a geyser. There was a kind of boiler as part of the kitchen range which was heated by the fire, the water being put in and withdrawn with a ladle. The bath had to be filled by buckets from this device. Water for washday was provided by a "copper". This was a brick construction enclosing a metal (?copper) hemisphere under which was a fireplace. It was about 4' square in area and about 3' deep. It occupied a corner of the scullery and had its own chimney. The copper must have been about 2'6" in diameter, I have called it a hemisphere but, in fact it was deeper than a true hemisphere would have been and probably held about 30 gallons filled by buckets from the tap. This crude but effective piece of construction (it was part of the fabric of the house) provided all the water for washday, which was a major operation and occupied a full working day of heavy manual labour. Apart from the copper

there were three major pieces of equipment;a dolly-tub which was a vertical barrel-shaped tub with an open top,about 2' dia and 2'6" deep,made of corrugated,galvanised iron or possibly zinc;a soaking/rinsing "bath" made of wood,about 3'x1'6" in area at the top and about 1' deep,which looked like the bottom half of a German coffin and,the star of the show,the mangle. This instrument of torture was basically two solid wooden cylinders driven through a simple gearbox by a cast-iron wheel with a handle,turned by hand.The framework was cast iron and the whole thing must have weighed several hundredweight.Week in,week out,all over the country,working-class women spent their Mondays with these grotesque implements,probably doing as much manual labour in that one day as most men did in a week.By 1937 Gran was in her 70's and it amazes me now to think how she coped with it all.Having washed,rinsed and mangled all the clothes, they had to be hung on the line in the garden to dry,unless it was raining,in which case they were draped over clothes-horses (wooden,folding frames) before the fire.On Tuesday,of course the clothes had to be ironed,every one of them-sheets,pillow-cases,shirts,underclothes,the lot.This drudgery lasted well into the fifties,when viable washing machines came onto the market at the same time as a rising standard of living enabled ordinary people to afford them.Ironing continued well into the seventies when improved synthetic fabrics,mixed with natural fibres,removed the need for it.Gran had bought a new mangle to move into the new house.I suppose it was a more modern design than the old one-it was certainly painted a brighter colour-but was just as hard to operate.I was now big enough to take a turn on the mangle but it was all I could do to keep going for more than ten minutes at a time.It helped to give me a strong distaste for heavy manual work which has lasted all my life.

Before leaving 23 Manchester Street I had made friends with the children who lived at No27-the Trushells.There were five of them-Ken,Marjorie,Swanson,Betty and Byron.Ken was about a year older than me,Marjorie about the same age,Swanson a year younger and Betty two years,Byron was a baby in arms.Mr Trushell was an insurance agent,working for the Wesleyan General Insurance Society and in those days before family allowances they must have found it difficult to make ends meet.Ken Trushell was my

best Cleethorpes friend. He was quite intelligent but failed the scholarship exam and spent his schooldays at Elliston Street. If there had been any justice in the world he would have become a professional athlete; he was a natural ball player-football, cricket, table-tennis, billiards, snooker-he could play them all, with coaching he would have been up to professional standard at both soccer and cricket. He played for the school team and it surprises me that, in a football-mad place like Cleethorpes in the late thirties, he was never spotted by Grimsby Town or any of the other league clubs with scouts in the area.

At about the same time as Gran moved to 201 Grimsby Road a new cinema opened a couple of blocks away, next to Blundell Park. It was the first completely modern cinema in the area, was called The Ritz and was owned by a company called Union Cinemas, which had a policy of running Saturday morning clubs for children, showing educational and uplifting films as well as Westerns. Soon after it opened it was announced that the Children's Club would start the following Saturday morning with an admission price of 2d (1p). A long queue formed long before the doors opened and a noisy crowd of impatient children was allowed in. Most of them paid their twopence, I certainly did, but it wouldn't have been difficult to get in without paying as the few staff seemed to be bewildered by the whole thing. The stalls were soon filled and the circle was opened to cope with the numbers. At last the whole mob was inside.

Up to that point, apart from noisy chatter and general excitement, there had been no trouble and if a film had been shown straight away all would have been well. For some reason, nothing happened. Any schoolteacher could have told the manager what the next step would be, in less than ten minutes a riot had broken out. The floor had not yet been swept after the previous evening's performance and the ice cream cups, chocolate wrappers, cigarette packets and general rubbish from the floor became missiles to be thrown at friends, enemies, strangers, anyone. Fights broke out and smaller, weaker children were bullied by the strong. The sound of screaming, crying and sobbing could be heard among the general uproar. I had been a long way back in the queue and was sitting in the back row of the stalls, close to the entrance where the manager was standing. Despite the upheaval he was still authority of a kind and so the seats near the entrance were a model

of good behaviour. It struck me that I was in a good position to get out quickly if things got much worse. At last the manager pulled himself together sufficiently to try to calm things down. He did the worst thing possible: he walked down the aisle, pushing raving children out of his way, and climbed up on to the stage in front of the curtain, spreading his arms wide and calling for silence. At least I suppose he did, there was no microphone and his voice couldn't be heard amidst the pandemonium. He became the prime target for the missile-throwers who showered him with fortunately light-weight rubbish. He gave it up as a bad job and ran from the stage. After a few more minutes disorder somebody on the staff had the sense to do what should have been done at the start, dimmed the lights, opened the curtains and showed a film, the previous evening's newsreel. That didn't matter the mob had come to see a film and here one was. The audience quickly calmed down and the rest of the programme followed without incident.

I am surprised that in those days of public docility in the face of authority, nothing was ever heard about it. No policemen were called, nobody was prosecuted, nobody sued anybody else for assault. The children who had been present, like me, exchanged experiences and the whole thing was quickly forgotten. There was an article in the "Evening Telegraph" the following week about the luxury of the new super cinema near Blundell Park and the public spirit of the owners who were providing recreation for local children on Saturday mornings. This was certainly true as far as the first Saturday was concerned even though it was not what the company management had in mind. In fact the club never got off the ground and after a few months Union Cinemas became part of ABC which carried on running the Saturday morning children's show, dropping all pretence of its being any sort of a club. They showed a couple of "B" cowboy films with a ten-minute sing-song accompanied by the mighty Compton organ and doing the bare minimum to keep the kids off the streets for a couple of hours.

In the summer holidays of 1937 Kitty took me for a week's holiday to London. We stayed in a boarding house in Birkenhead Street near King's Cross. At that time the area was quite respectable, I wouldn't fancy staying round there now. I had been

to London once or twice before on day trips, I can remember seeing buses with "General" on their sides, but I hadn't been old enough to make anything of the place. This time I began to find the way around, the buses, trams and Underground fascinated me as did the cinemas with their lights and neon signs. The best thing, though, was Lyons Corner House in Coventry Street. I had been in cafes and restaurants before but never anywhere as wonderful as this. Kitty allowed me to choose whatever I wanted from the menu and for the first time in my life I had curry and rice: it was delicious. I had it for lunch and dinner four days running when Kitty suggested I should try something else. I chose a large hors d'oeuvre which was almost as delicious as beef curry. For the rest of the holiday I alternated the two dishes, followed by either a chocolate marshmallow or chocolate malted sundae. This holiday started my infatuation with London which has lasted for the rest of my life; even after living there for fourteen years I still get a kick out of being able to catch a bus at the end of the street to Piccadilly Circus. I don't remember much about the rest of the holiday except, of course for the trams and buses. Like most tourists Kitty found the Underground frightening and confusing; we had one advantage, however, our nearest station was King's Cross and, at that time, LT had the bright idea of using coloured lights at interchange stations to guide passengers to the big railway termini. King's Cross was indicated by a blue light and, following the blue light we began to find our way about. I wish I had been older so that I could remember London in the thirties more clearly. People who knew it then say it was at its best, people also say the same of Paris and New York. There are all sorts of reasons for this, none of the cities had been badly damaged in the War, although both London and Paris had been bombed, Paris had been shelled. The motor car was beginning to make itself felt but not to any serious extent, the only fast food outlets were fish and chip shops. High unemployment had a lot to do with it, jobs as street cleaners and rubbish collectors, porters and railmen on the Underground and the railways were eagerly sought. The work was hard, the pay small but it was a lot better than trying to avoid starvation on the dole. Once again the general fear of authority had a lot to do with it - there was none of the casual vandalism towards public property that is common today, a child or teenager chalking

or otherwise defacing the environment would be likely to be rebuked by any passing adult and, if not properly contrite, given a clout across the head. If caught by a policeman he might get the same treatment or, if the offence was more serious be taken to the police station to be charged or, if he was lucky, for his parents to be sent for to be warned of what would happen to him if he was caught doing such a thing again. When they got him home the warning would be emphasized with slaps, clouts or in stricter households, the slipper, strap or cane. Children and adolescents were expected to keep a low profile and treat adults, all adults, with respect. Gran, Kitty and Harry all clouted me across the head on occasion, usually for cheek, but never hit me with anything. I was lucky, many of my friends, including Ken Trushell, were thrashed with their father's belt.

In the Summer of 1937 Cleethorpes became a borough after many years of being an Urban District. This meant it could have a mayor and corporation but was still subservient to Lindsey (one of the ridings of Lincolnshire) County Council. Grimsby was a County Borough, proudly independent. I was old enough to take an interest in such things and asked Gran and Kitty why Grimsby and Cleethorpes were two separate towns when, for all practical purposes, they were one. They both talked about the Meggies (Cleethorpers) trying to graze their cattle in the fields which stretched from the foot of Isaac's Hill to Humber Street and being thrown out by the Grimsby Freeman (still in existence) who confiscated the cattle to teach the Meggies a lesson. For a time the area was like the Scottish Borders in the 15th Century with raids on each others' cattle and pitched battles, fortunately without serious injury, but once the railway came, the docks grew and the pastures became prime building land to be covered with rows of terrace houses people had better things to do than mess about with cattle, there was much more money in fish.

In the end Uncle Bert explained that Cleethorpes was run by a group of business men who owned the amusements, shops and cafes along the promenade and wanted to keep it that way. They knew that if the town amalgamated with Grimsby they would cease to be big fish in a small pool (he actually used that term) and would no longer be able to keep the seaside resort to themselves. They had virtually kicked Billy Butlin out of the place when he had wanted to build a holiday camp on Humberston Fitties so he went to Skegness instead, greatly increasing the attractions

of that rather bleak,featureless resort,to the extent that it has long ago overtaken Cleethorpes which has never managed to replace the day trippers who came on the trains which stopped coming soon after WW2.

Grimsby had decided to get rid of its trams and in November 1936 they were replaced by large,double-decker,AEC trolleybuses. These were the latest thing at the time and had centre-entrance doors,which were pneumatically operated;the hiss of the doors opening and closing became a familiar sound.For a few months travelling was complicated by the fact that Cleethorpes continued to run the trams (they took Grimsby's over)and the trolleybuses only ran as far as the boundary (frontier?) at Park Street. If you wanted to travel into Cleethorpes you either caught a tram,now with a label on the side proclaiming "Cleethorpes UDC Tramways" or changed to a tram at Park Street.Finally,in mid-1937 Cleethorpes acquired double-deck trolleybuses of its own,conventional,rear-entrance AEC's painted dark blue and cream. Through running resumed,the system being extended to the Bathing Pool.

In the Autumn Term of 1936 I had moved up with the rest of the class into the lowest junior form of the Lower School. School life changed and became more formal now we had left the kindergarten atmosphere of the Prep.Department.There were eight forms in the Lower School-the two junior forms LJ and LS,five forms of the first senior year and one form of the second year. Each morning we started the day with prayers and a hymn,supervised by the head of the Lower School,Mr.Harry Wheatley;my small repertoire of hymns dates from that time.The music (and maths) master,Mr.Tom Webb,accompanied the hymn on the piano and played a tune as we filed out to our classrooms.He was fond of Percy Grainger:to this day "Country Gardens" and "Shepherds Hay" take me straight back to the late thirties,the smell of chalk,ink, paper and children.Mr.Wheatley was a good teacher in every way, his subject was French so he didn't teach the two Junior forms but we were all frightened of him.He didn't mess about,the slightest breach of decorum during prayers was punished on the spot,as far as the boys were concerned,by a clout across the head,the girls were ordered to see the senior mistress,Miss Hetty Carrigan,after prayers,to be given lines to write out at home.I think these two years were my most successful academ-

ically, I was good at the Arts subjects but terrible at Arithmetic, largely because of idleness on my part and the poor quality of mathematics teaching at that time. I was always in the top half of the class, usually in the first ten. I enjoyed PE, Music, which consisted entirely of choral singing to Tom Webb's piano accompaniment ("Linden Lea", "Cocky Olly Birds") and Games (not compulsory) which were Soccer in the Autumn and Spring Terms, cricket in the Summer Term. I had several friends at the school, my best friend, however was Jack Moore. His parents invited me to come to their house in Weelsby Road to play with Jack one evening a week during term time. Jack never came to the Lincoln Arms. I never wondered why this was at the time. With hindsight I suppose it was because his parents didn't consider a docklands pub a suitable place for their son to visit. Like many people who have got on in the world (They both came from the same New Clee area of the town as Kitty) they were jealous of their middle-class status although Tom Moore's scruples didn't prevent him drinking in the best room at the Lincoln on occasion, or betting on the colour of the barmaid's knickers (a regular pastime which the girl was expected to take in good part and to decide the result in the most obvious way).

Tom Moore was a well-known character on the Docks. He had started with nothing, worked at a variety of jobs, joined the Grimsby Chums Battalion - the 10th Lincolns - in 1914 and went over the top with the rest of Kitchener's Army on July 1st, 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme. He was gassed and wounded, so missing the fate of most of the battalion who were killed in the first few hours. Like so many of the men who were gassed in WW1 he suffered for the rest of his life from bouts of a terrible, racking cough which left him purple-faced and gasping for breath. After the war he became a successful fish merchant. He was not popular largely because of his boorish bullying manner, complete lack of any kind of tact or diplomacy and loud, hectoring voice. Actually, I quite liked him and wish I had known him after growing up, the description I have written above is based on conversations I had years later with people who knew him and, not least, Jack.

Like many fish merchants he had ambitions to be a trawler owner, the top of Grimsby's social strata. Sometime in 1935 he formed, with associates, the Marstrand Fishing Company, which owned

a small diesel engined trawler called the "Girl Pat", (if Tom Moore had won the toss it would have been called the "Girl Myrtle" which wouldn't have fitted the headlines so well). The ship, under the command of Skipper George "Dod" Orsborne set sail on April 1st, 1936, for the North Sea fishing grounds and vanished for several weeks. Suddenly the news came in that the vessel, skipper and crew were safe and well in Georgetown, British Guiana, where they were shortly put under arrest on a charge of barratry (The captain and crew taking and using a ship not belonging to them, without the consent of the rightful owners and using it for their own purposes). By this time the story was in the national press. Tom Moore was interviewed by several papers and denied all knowledge of the affair. As far as he was concerned the "Girl Pat" had gone on a normal fishing trip, his associates said the same. The only reason Orsborne gave for his adventure was a desire to show that he was capable of navigating such a small vessel to romantic far-off places. Grimsby trawlers not being provided charts for the Atlantic and South American waters, he had used a sixpenny atlas to navigate. Nobody in Grimsby believed a word of it. Various theories were put forward, most of them centring on the financial situation of the Marstrand Fishing company and all of them implicating Tom Moore. In due course Dod Orsborne and his crew were brought home and tried at the Old Bailey. He was found guilty of barratry and sentenced to eighteen months in prison with hard labour. Tom Moore stuck to his denial of guilty knowledge for the rest of his life. Orsborne came out of prison in 1938 and returned to fishing. Like many skippers he held a commission in the Royal Naval Reserve and when WW2 broke out became a Skipper Lieutenant in mine-sweepers, serving throughout the war with some distinction. He resumed fishing after the war and died in the fifties.

In early 1938 Kitty became ill and was diagnosed as having tuberculosis, at that time considered to be incurable. She went into hospital in Hull and spent several weeks there in the Royal Infirmary and the Sutton Annexe, on the outskirts of the city. I lived at Gran's while she was away and was taken to visit her on two or three occasions by Aunt Evelynne. Travelling to Hull was a great adventure; you caught the train to New Holland and then sailed across the Humber in a paddle steamer. There was a bar and refreshment room, you could walk on deck, you could watch the great steam engine which turned the paddle-wheels; it was a real sea voyage even though, on a calm, clear day,

it only lasted about half an hour. It has all been replaced by the Humber Bridge, as useless as it is beautiful, built to redeem a promise made by the Labour Government in 1967 in order to win the Hull East by-election. One of the paddle steamers, the "Tattersall Castle" is moored alongside the Embankment, near Westminster Bridge, having been converted into a restaurant.

The interest of the journey went some way towards reducing my fears about Kitty's health. We had a medical encyclopedia and I had read up Tuberculosis, to learn that it was frequently incurable and fatal. I kept this piece of information to myself, worrying about Kitty's imminent death. Happily, the Hull Royal Infirmary's doctors managed to ameliorate the condition, with hindsight it probably wasn't TB, and she was allowed home. She never regained perfect health, considering herself a semi-invalid for the rest of her life. Her condition didn't prevent her from working when it suited her, however.

I was now old enough to read the "Daily Mail" and "Daily Mirror", which we took daily. From the start of 1938 Germany began to make the headlines, taking over from the Spanish Civil War and the Japanese invasion of China. In March the Germans invaded Austria, being received with open arms by the majority of its people. Herr Hitler, as he was described, was a figure of fun to English children who were forever imitating his forelock, moustache and raised-arm salute but was beginning to be taken seriously by adults as was his fellow-dictator, Benito Mussolini in Italy. It is strange to remember that Mussolini was regarded as just as much of a menace as Hitler and Italy as powerful as Germany, having a powerful navy and air force and a large, conscript army. The Italians had invaded Abyssinia in 1936 and had made hard work of defeating the ill-armed tribesmen who formed its army. They finally distinguished themselves by bombing the Abyssinians with mustard gas.

Jack and I often discussed the international situation. His father had been to Germany to spend some marks he had acquired in a business deal. The German government ^{kept} tight control of foreign exchange and it was the only way he could get hold of the money. When in a good mood (infrequent) he would tell us stories of his visit and the antics of the various uniformed branches of the Nazi party. Sometimes Jack's Uncle Leslie would visit and chat to us. He was an intelligent, good-natured man, younger than Jack's parents, drove an impressive SS100 and was prominent in local musical circles. One evening I arrived at Jack's house as usual, to be greeted by Jack at the door. He put his finger to his lips and led the way upstairs to his bedroom. The house was in silence. "What's up, has somebody died?", I asked. Jack began to cry, then pulled himself together. "Uncle Leslie fell in front of a Tube train in London this afternoon", he said. He had never been to London and questioned me about the Underground, which I answered as best I could, both of us speaking in hushed voices, I soon went home. The incident was on the front page of the

"Evening Telegraph" as was the inquest, which returned a verdict of accidental death. Leslie had, of course, committed suicide. When we were grown up Jack and I discussed the incident, both of us remembering the evening vividly, and Jack explained that Leslie had been a homosexual who was being blackmailed by a former lover. In those days to be outed as a queer in a town like Grimsby was the ultimate disgrace, almost certainly leading to a prison sentence as well as social ostracism.

In the Summer term of 1938 most of the class sat the Scholarship exam. Several didn't, including Jack and me, not being old enough—you had to be over 11 years old on 31st July (?August)—and I wasn't 11 until the October, Jack not until the following March. Towards the end of term Jack announced that he was going to Clee Grammar School after the holiday. I can only suppose that it had more *éclat* than Wintringham (its scholastic record was nowhere near as good, Jack's sister, Myrtle, was in the sixth form at Wintringham and had won a scholarship to Oxford) and was at that time an all boys' school. Possibly they thought (correctly) that it gave a better preparation for public school.

In the Spring of 1938 Harry had bought another car, the Ford 8 having been sold to provide his surety needed to take over the Lincoln Arms. This time he got a black Hillman Minx, JV6664, new, but at a reduced price as it was a 1937 model. To help Kitty's recovery he also bought a bungalow on the Humberston Fitties. It had started life as a horse-drawn caravan; the wheels had been removed, an extension built on to the back and a pitched roof added to make it a sturdy, two-bedroomed dwelling. There was a cooking range and a rudimentary kitchen/scullery but no electricity, running water or drainage. Illumination came from paraffin lamps and water from a standpipe, about two hundred yards away. The wooden lavatory was at the end of the patch of rough ground that passed for a back garden; if it had been made of brick it would have been a classic example of a brick shithouse. It was emptied periodically by the night-soil man who travelled along the line of bungalows with a horse and cart. There was a radio which ran on batteries that lasted for a few days and cost a fortune to replace. When the weather was fine it was a beautiful place. In dull or rainy weather, however, it was extremely boring, particularly when the radio battery failed. For some reason we never seemed to have any books there, God knows why—Kitty liked to read and I had a lot of books both at the Lincoln and at Gran's.

Kitty took me to London for a week's holiday in the summer of 1938 and I once again enjoyed the cuisine of Lyons Corner House. In September the Autumn Term started and I moved up into the first form-1B. After five years spent progressing through the Prep and Junior Depts. with children, most of whom had been together for the whole of that time, I suddenly found myself in the company of the cream of Grimsby's schools; all of them had passed the scholarship, I was the only one that hadn't. The form teacher, Miss Hetty Carrigan, seated us in alphabetical order. I got a desk in the corner of the back row; next to me was a girl with short, bobbed hair and round spectacles, wearing a new gymslip and black woollen stockings; her name was Dorothy Drever.

School life changed drastically. We started French, we had to do homework, we were expected to work very hard, we went to school on Saturday mornings. Not long after the start of term Mr. Wheatley called us all into the Hall and told us what we were to do in the event of war breaking out. It came down to staying at home until we were told what to do. Most of us read the papers and listened to the wireless and knew that there was an international crisis because Herr Hitler wanted to annexe that part of Czecho Slovakia where the Sudeten Germans lived. Towards the end of the month the Prime Minister flew to Munich, met Hitler and was photographed on his return standing on the steps of an aircraft waving a sheet of paper and saying he had brought back "peace in our time". I doubt if the Czechs were best pleased about it, a large part of their country having been given away by Britain and France.

Despite the many changes I quite enjoyed life in 1B. I liked French, being frightened of Mr. Wheatley helped, making me work much harder than I was inclined to do. He laid great emphasis on pronunciation, we spent several weeks learning phonetics and pronunciation. I have been complimented on my accent by French people and I have Harry Wheatley to thank for it. My fear of him went very deep. Many years later, when I was in my late thirties, I met him in the street. I smiled and said "Good morning Mr. Wheatley", he recognised me, smiled and raised his hand in greeting. I flinched.

I was not frightened of the other teachers and so didn't push myself unduly; to make matters worse I hated homework, a feeling that stayed with me, in various forms for the rest of my life. There was no excuse for this, I had the use of a large roll-top desk at the Lincoln and the living-room table at Gran's with an abundant supply of pens, pencils, ink and stationery. I was left in peace to do homework if I wanted to, which I seldom did.

Attending school on Saturday mornings was a new experience for us all. We had three normal lessons then break followed by two periods devoted to "Hobbies". These covered a lot of ground including Model Railways, First Aid,

Chess and Stamp Collecting--all of which I attended at different times. With few exceptions they were a general waste of time and must have been intensely disliked by the teachers who had to supervise them. Dorothy Drever attended the stamp collecting section and I remember the music master, Tramp^{*} Wheeler, explaining the Greek letters on some of the stamps in her XLCR album to her. I have the album and the stamps in the back bedroom to-day.

For sports and games Wintringham was divided into three "houses"--Tennyson, Hereward and Franklin. I became the captain of the Tennyson fifth team at football by giving a team list to Harry Wheatley and asking "Shall I be captain, sir?"; since nobody else had said anything and he couldn't think of any obvious objection he said "Yes, all right, Gifford, you be captain." I retained this exalted position (almost the only distinction I achieved at school) until the last weeks of the season when I was promoted to the fourth team and Kitty bought me a new Tennyson football shirt--green with a white V.

During the last days of the Autumn Term the Lower School party was held at the Gaiety Dance Hall. In preparation for this we had been taught various dances including a rudimentary fox trot and the latest craze--the Lambeth Walk. We were each given a programme and had to choose partners for each dance. I have Dorothy Drever's programme in front of me; against dance no. 15--Military two step--is written "Bruce Gifford". I remember that she wore a long blue dance-dress, had her hair waved and had been expertly and discreetly made up, as had most of the girls. I remember thinking what a difference a hairdo, lipstick and rouge and the removal of glasses made. I wore a "Dinner Suit"--black jacket and striped, long trousers (my first) with a white shirt, striped tie, black waistcoat and black patent dancing pumps.

On the last day of term Miss Carrigan read out our form positions. She soon reached Dorothy Drever's name in the first six or seven. After a while it struck me that my name hadn't been read out. At last it was--"Thirty, Bruce Gifford.", and there she stopped: there were no more. I was bottom of the class. It was one of the worst things that could have happened to me; not from any considerations of prestige or disgrace but because I got away with it. Life went on, Christmas came, there were presents and parties, I went to Gran's on Boxing Day and stayed until the new term started in January. The only person to express surprise at my lowly position was Jack's mother, Jack having come top in his first term at Clee Grammar. I learned that there was no need to exert myself if I didn't want to, you could be bottom of the form and survive quite comfortably. For the rest of my school career I stayed in the lower half of whatever class I was in although I was never again bottom.

In early January 1939 Grimsby Town began another campaign in the F.A.Cup. They had reached the Semi Final in 1936, losing 1-0 to Arsenal at Leeds Road, Huddersfield. They had got no further than the 5th Round in 1937 and in 1938 had been beaten 2-1 by Swindon Town in the 3rd Round. This was regarded as a disgrace as Swindon were in the 3rd Division (South) and Town were in the top half of the 1st Division (now the Premier League). They beat Tranmere Rovers 6-0 in the 3rd Round and drew 2-2 at Millwall in the 4th. The replay was at Blundell Park on 21st January, a Tuesday. There were no floodlights in those days, the kick-off was at 2p.m and 14,400 people managed to get time off or produce plausible excuses in order to attend. This didn't apply to school-boys or school teachers, of course. During the last lesson of the afternoon the sound of uproar came from the next classroom, then our door burst open and Mr. Wheatley appeared. "They've won 3-2!", he cried and rushed off to spread the news as 1B cheered. I had started to go to Blundell Park and was keenly interested in the game generally but I don't remember seeing any of the Cup matches. In the end Town made their way into the Semi-Final again, this time at Old Trafford, Manchester, against Wolves. The regular goalkeeper, George Tweedy, was injured and the reserve goalie, George Moulson, took his place. Grimsby did most of the attacking for the first twenty minutes or so then Wolves broke away, the ball came into the Town penalty area, Moulson and the Wolves centre-forward, Dicky Dorsett, both went for it, Moulson dived and caught the ball. Dorsett, still running, attempted to kick it out of Moulson's hands, missed and kicked his head instead. Moulson was carried off to hospital with concussion. They didn't have substitutes then so Grimsby moved one of the full-backs into goal and played on with ten men. The result was inevitable. Wolves 5 Grimsby 0.

There were 77,000 spectators at the match, (I believe it is still the record crowd at Old Trafford) a large proportion of them Grimsby or Wolves supporters, completely unsegregated, and there was no report of any trouble during or after the match. I wonder what the effect of such a situation would be today. There was some justice, however, Wolves lost 4-0 to Portsmouth in the Final.

Kitty went into Hull Royal Infirmary in early 1939 but was only there for a few days. Later she stayed at the bungalow for a few weeks, during which time I stayed at Gran's. After the Easter holidays a trial cricket match was held and I scored fourteen runs and took two wickets, both clean bowled. I was selected for the Tennyson IVth team and played throughout the term. At this time my performance at both cricket and football was above average. I played in the House IVth teams (It was unheard of for a first former to play above that level) and could look forward eventually to play for one or other of the school teams. Such skill as I had at games was not acquired through any coaching at school since there wasn't any at my level, but through hours of playing football and cricket with Ken Trushell and his schoolmates on a field adjoining Sydney Park in Cleethorpes. This rankles with me to this day because I believe that, with coaching, I would have grown into a competent player of both games at local league level. Since that school year I scarcely played cricket at all and very little organised football. I believe I have missed a lot of interest and pleasure thereby.

In the Summer Term also I sat the Scholarship exam, a year after my classmates. There were two preliminary intelligence tests, very similar to the I.Q. tests I later took in the Army. After the second test Harry Wheatley called me to one side and told me that I had done very well on both tests but better on the second than the first. He looked as if he was about to say more but thought better of it. He held out his hand palm upwards and raised it above his head, "You know", he said and gestured again. I told Dorothy about this incident years later. She explained that it was a sacking offence for a teacher to divulge information about the Eleven Plus, as it was by then called, and Mr. Wheatley was trying to convey that I had come very high up, if not top, in the tests without actually saying so. A few weeks later I sat the final exam in English and Maths and passed. It didn't make much difference, Harry still had to pay school fees, but I got my schoolbooks free. Harry bought me a Sun racing bike as a reward.

At the end of term we were given a letter once again telling us to stay at home until told what to do if war broke out, by then obviously only a matter of time. The Germans had occupied

Czechoslovakia and were making threatening noises towards Poland, whose frontiers Britain and France guaranteed. Conscription had been started, for the first time in peacetime in Britain and the country was busily re-arming; in August the Germans signed a non-aggression pact with Russia. We had been issued with gas masks and now Anderson air raid shelters were to be erected in people's gardens. This was achieved by putting the able-bodied unemployed (still well over a million) to work. They were quickly trained in the assembly and installation of the shelters, delivered to the relevant addresses, together with the components, a few tools and a spade and left to get on with it. The man who installed Gran's shelter was extremely efficient the garden was excavated, the shelter erected and covered with earth in less than two working days. Bert decided that the entrance needed more protection and devised a sand-bagged baffle, similar to those used for the more permanent dug-outs he had occupied in the trenches. The sandbags (empty) and timber for its construction appeared one afternoon in a small van belonging to an electrician who did a lot of work at the Brighowgate Homes. I had a trolley, made from an old ironing board and two sets of pram wheels, which was used to carry full sandbags from the sands over Fuller Street Bridge and in a short time the shelter met with Bert's approval.

Kitty decided to get a holiday in while the going was good. We went, once again, to London, staying this time at the Union Jack Hostel in Exton Street near Waterloo. It belonged to an organisation devoted to the welfare of ex-servicemen and their families and, although rather military in its organisation and decor, was comfortable and very cheap. The effect of the coming war on Grimsby and Cleethorpes was as nothing compared to London. Air Raid Shelter signs were beginning to appear in the streets, barrage balloons littered the parks which were beginning to be scarred by long lines of trenches. For the first time I saw soldiers in the new "Battledress" which was beginning to replace the old WW1 uniform with its peaked cap, brass buttons and puttees. Battledress made good sense, it was practical and, once made to fit, comfortable to wear with exception of the headgear, a khaki version of the old forage cap. The French, Germans and Americans all had versions of this cap which were practical and comfortable. The British Army and Air Force version was neither and looked ridiculous as well.

At that time Central London had a large number of "News Cinemas", small theatres showing a programme of short films, cartoons and newsreels which lasted an hour or so and were intended for tourists, travellers with time to kill between trains and (I am sure) for the lunchtime and early evening pursuit of illicit office romances. Several of these cinemas were called "Eros"

after the statue. We were not familiar with psychological terms then: God knows what a cinema called "Eros" would show to-day. Kitty liked visiting these places to rest her feet and we saw newsreel after newsreel showing German and Italian troops marching, Stukas dive-bombing and shots of torch-light rallies in Nuremberg. To even things up the newsreels also showed the British and French re-armament programme, usually illustrated by shots of the Maginot Line and the Grand Fleet in line astern. There would also be sequences of politicians of all nationalities except one travelling to and fro to try to avert the approaching war. The exception was, of course, the United States, which was carefully keeping out of Europe's quarrels. The commentaries were delivered by stern, male voices over a soundtrack of martial music; Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" was popular. On the Sunday, 27th August, Kitty took me to visit a Gifford(?) aunt who lived in Harrow. I only remember one thing about the visit; one of my "cousins", a young man of about 20 took me on the back of his motor bike to see the Hurricane fighters which had flown from Edinburgh to London in an hour. The aircraft were drawn up at the edge of Northolt Airfield (Aerodrome then). It was the first time I had seen modern aircraft in camouflage colours and I was very impressed. My cousin had told me that he was joining the Air Force and I asked him if we had many Hurricanes and he laughed, saying he wouldn't be surprised if the ones before us were all we had. He probably thought he was joking.

In the evening papers on Thursday, 31st August, it was announced that evacuation of children from London was to start the following day. Kitty decided, very sensibly, that we had better go home while there were still trains running to Grimsby. We packed, Kitty paid the Union Jack's bill and we caught the 2345 (11-45 p.m. in 1939 language) train from King's Cross, arriving at Grimsby Docks station about 4-30 a.m. on Friday, 1st September. I don't think Kitty warned anyone that we were coming home. She couldn't have telephoned since nobody had a phone, not even a public one at the Lincoln Arms. She might have sent a telegram but I doubt it.

I went to Gran's during the afternoon and went to the Ritz to see the early evening showing of "The Spy In Black". By the time I returned home it had been announced on the wireless that German troops had crossed the border into Poland and that Warsaw had been bombed by German aircraft. Both Britain and France announced general mobilization, black out regulations were to come into force shortly, in the meantime as little light as possible was to be shown between dusk and dawn.

The blackout became an important factor in life for the next five years. It was imposed rigorously by the Police and an increasing number of Air Raid

Wardens whose cry of "Put that light out" became one of the first catch phrases of the war. People could be (and were) sent to prison for trivial breaches of the regulations "pour encourager les autres". Vehicle headlights were reduced to danger level, street lights were permanently switched off, the road accident figures rose to record levels and stayed there for the duration. Road deaths during those years were far higher than they are now with about 10% of the current number of vehicles on the roads. No other country in the world imposed such a strict black out. I have never seen an assessment of its value to our defence against air attack and I should very much like to see one. I doubt very much whether the lives it saved were any where near as many as the deaths it caused. It was the first example of the incompetence with which the British Establishment conducted the country's war effort—to cause the greatest inconvenience, difficulty and danger to everyone except themselves and, of course, the Germans.

On Sunday, 3rd September, the papers said that it was expected that an important announcement would be made during the morning and that wireless sets should be kept switched on. At 1100 the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, spoke and announced that the German government had rejected a British and French ultimatum to withdraw its troops from Poland and that we were therefore, at war with Germany. A few minutes later the sirens sounded the first air raid warning. The Thirties had given way to the Forties a few months early.

With hindsight a lot of things ended on 3rd September, 1939. It finally marked the end of the old Victorian version of England or Great Britain which had somehow survived WW1. The land of hope and glory whose bounds were to be set wider still and wider had tottered through increasing economic difficulties after 1918 into the world depression which lasted until WW2. Re-armament had started in 1936 and had progressed slowly until the German annexation of the Sudetenland in late 1938 when the government finally accepted that war was inevitable. By 1939 the army was equipped and prepared to fight in the trenches of WW1 again, the navy had a large number of obsolete battleships and battle cruisers and was ready to fight the Battle of Jutland all over again. It had very few submarines, however, and had no intention of operating the convoy system to protect merchant shipping if it could help it. Fortunately the Air Force, although poorly equipped at the start (both

the RAF and the Fleet Air Arm entered the war with biplanes as front-line aircraft), was backed by a modern aircraft industry which was beginning to turn out fighters which were a match for the Germans and was starting to order medium bombers and naval aircraft from the Americans.

The country was not prepared for war. There was none of the enthusiasm of August 1914, no appeals for volunteers or queues at the recruiting offices. Conscription had started in early 1939 and most young men were content to wait until they were called up. The main fear was of air raids which were expected at short notice. We had been issued with gas masks, Anderson shelters and booklets advising us on what to do when the raids started. The tone of this advice was reassuring, as long as we stayed in our shelters when the air raid warning sounded, kept our gas masks handy and followed the simple instructions all would be well. Unbeknown to ordinary people was the experts' belief that we were about to be attacked by great fleets of heavy bombers which would cause death and destruction among the population of London and the large industrial centres. The emphasis was on "death".

This belief was based on the only evidence they had—the Japanese invasion of China and the operations of the Germans and Italians on the side of General Franco's Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. Secretly they had prepared for deaths on a huge scale; they expected at least 100,000 deaths in air raids during the first weeks of war, many of them being caused by poison gas. Happily they were wrong. There were no air raids of any size for almost a year.

The war marked the end of childhood, as far as I was concerned, and the entry into adolescence. One of the signs of senility is that one's memories of childhood and youth become more vivid with advancing age while one's short-term memory deteriorates. I can certainly remember the last year or so before the war very clearly. For most people it was a time of steady improvement in the standard of living. Ordinary people, working people, became better housed, better fed and better dressed. You needed money, certainly, but not very much money. Prices had fallen since 1918. Housing was cheap, you could rent a three-bedroomed terrace house in a working class district for about 12/- (60p) per week and if you earned enough to raise a mortgage from one of the widely advertised building societies (say £4 a week) you could start buying a new house on a nice estate, costing about £500.

My memories of the time are all accompanied by the bright, beautifully designed 16 and 32 sheet posters on hoardings advertising the good things of life to be easily afforded. Cigarettes were the most common—"Player's Please", "Senior Service Satisfy", "Capstan They're Blended Better", "Kensitas—Four For Your Friends", "Ten Minutes To Wait—Mine's A Minor" were all familiar

slogans and catch phrases. The very names of the cigarettes bring the thirties back. Park Drive, Weights, Gold Flake, Passing Clouds, Three Castles, Ardath, Black Cat, Craven A, the ubiquitous Woodbines and the more exotic Greys, Richmond Gems, Abdulla Egyptian and Turkish and Sobranie Black Russian. It's no wonder that smoking was increasingly popular. In 1939 a packet of 20 Player's or Senior Service cost 1/- (5p), smaller cigarettes like Woodbines or Park Drive proportionately less. A whole segment of the retail trade was devoted to selling tobacco products. In Grimsby the firm of Tierney's had several shops, the main one being in Cleethorpe Road, near Riby Square. It was a very large shop with a high ceiling and several assistants who spoke in the hushed voices appropriate to the serious business of serving in a cathedral dedicated to the pleasures of nicotine. It sold nothing but tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, and the pipes, cigarette holders, lighters, flints, matches, lighter fuel, cigarette cases, ashtrays and all the other "smokers' requisites" as they were called. It provided a smell of incense suitable to a cathedral—that of a hundred different kinds of tobacco all mixed together. If Heaven has a smell it will be a combination of Tierney's and Hewitt's Brewery. For some reason, smoking, particularly cigarettes, seems to exemplify the Thirties. It was part of a more free and easy atmosphere in which one could smoke, drink beer or spirits (wine was either Port or Sherry, drunk at Christmas, wedding receptions and funeral teas) and eat anything you fancied without being thought either anti-social or suicidal. This did not, of course apply to extra-marital sex which certainly went on but was kept very quiet indeed, as for homosexuality, it went on as well but was kept even quieter..

We were due to return to school on 6th September but a letter was sent to parents telling us to report to the Upper School, different year groups at different times. I reported, as instructed, and was sent to the Music Room where the rest of my new class, 2B, were. There we were greeted by Miss Greenfield, known as "Lizzie", who issued us with the necessary books for the second year. She told us to take them home, start reading the English, History and Geography books, write an essay on "Wartime Changes" and report back to the Music Room in a fortnight's time. So began my first term in the second form.

I stayed at Gran's, the Summer holidays continued. During this time the only serious warfare, as far as we were concerned, took place at sea. German U-boats continued where they had left off in 1918, sinking several merchant ships, the battleship "Royal Oak" and the aircraft carrier "Courageous", with heavy loss of life. I read my school books and library books, the cinemas had closed at the outbreak of war but soon opened again, regional football leagues were organised and life quickly returned to a semblance of normal once it became obvious that we were not about to be massacred in heavy air raids. Every other school had opened for the Autumn Term as usual. Wintringham

was the only one closed. To this day I do not know the reason. It had been decided before the war that the school would move to its present site at Highfield, the Eleanor St. premises were to house the new Technical School. Temporary accommodation was being completed when war was declared and everything seems to have come to a stop, presumably on the grounds that there were more pressing matters to attend to. I have a feeling that information must have been sent to parents explaining what was happening and there must have been comment in the local press. If so I didn't see it, nor did Kitty, Harry or Gran tell me anything. I wasn't particularly bothered; I was quite happy at Gran's although I missed Ken Trushell and my other Cleethorpes friends, all of whom were at school. One other friend I missed was Jack. The Government had set up a system to control the sale and distribution of fish. One aspect of this was to move the fish merchants away from the fishing ports to towns well away from the coast, the Moores were sent to Oxford and then to Hereford. As might be expected the scheme caused chaos—the distribution of fish came to a standstill—and things were soon re-organised on a more realistic basis. The Moore family had to move to Fleetwood, where they stayed until the end of the war.

The start of adolescence meant a change to more adult interests. I still had a large Hornby train set and a collection of Dinky Toys, read the "Film Fun", "Radio Fun" and "Hotspur" that Gran bought me but I became keenly interested in things like aircraft recognition, uniforms and rank badges and the progress of the war. I had started reading Dickens, I think Pickwick Papers was the first, newspapers and magazines and was beginning to take a serious interest in films. I had a small Box Brownie camera but was rarely allowed a film and the money to get it processed. Kitty didn't approve of "wasting film" on anything but family snaps and those infrequently. I would give a lot of money to have the photographs I could have taken of the houses we lived in, the town as it was, the trams and buses and a lot more family snaps. Still, I probably wouldn't have taken such photos of ordinary, everyday things and people who were there all the time. You only realise too late that the buildings have all been pulled down or drastically altered and the people are all dead.

The Autumn Term of 1939 finally started on November 20th. Education is supposed to have deteriorated over the years and the Grammar Schools are held up as an example of the high standards that used to apply in the old days. Here was an example of those standards—the only grammar school in a large, prosperous town closed down for two thirds of a term and its pupils left to their own devices with hardly any attempt to instruct them. Every

other school in Grimsby and Cleethorpes worked normally; in other parts of the country schools coped with the upheaval of evacuation, sometimes moving en bloc from large towns to unsuitable premises in safe areas. Somehow the difficulties were overcome and school continued. Not Grimsby, its grammar school packed up for months and nobody seems to have given a damn or made any attempt to improvise with temporary premises.

We were told to report to Highfield at 8-30 on November 20th. It was suggested that we should wear Wellington boots to school, taking a pair of gym shoes to wear in class. This seemed odd, there had been no snow or heavy rain. We found the reason as we walked down the lane past Barrett's Recreation Ground. The place was a quagmire. There were a few cinder tracks which soon became worse than the soggy ground. Two large huts, one of them our old Prep. Department had been erected, providing six classrooms. The first, second and third forms were in these huts, the rest of the school was somehow shoe-horned into Highfield House. To make the best use of the accommodation the school was split in two—those living furthest from Highfield went in the morning, the rest in the afternoon. I was in 2B (an amalgamation of 2C and 2D), attending in the mornings, the other half of the second year were in 2X and 2Y. I parted company with Dorothy Drever who was in 2A.

I suppose we got some kind of an education during the months in 2B, perhaps half of what we should have had. At some time in the Spring term of 1940 they switched us round so that I went in the afternoons. The holidays were greatly reduced but Kitty took me to London for a few days in April. London had not then been bombed and the main changes were the large number of servicemen in the streets and barrage balloons in the sky (Grimsby had two). We saw "Gone With The Wind", most of which bored me to tears but which started an interest in the American Civil War which has lasted all my life. I remembered Gran telling me that her father had said that she was born on the day that Mr. Lincoln's soldiers captured Atlanta. In later years, thanks to the American Library, I studied the Civil War and learned that General Sherman's troops actually took Atlanta in September, 1864, Gran having been born in the July. Still, it was a good story.

By this time the war had started in earnest. The Germans had invaded Denmark, which fell without a shot being fired, and Norway. The Norwegians defended themselves and an Allied Expeditionary Force was sent to help them. Its efforts were unavailing, however, and Norway soon fell. I do not propose to write a history of WW2 but I must include parts of it because of its effect on my life. The Germans invaded Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg and France in early May and by the end of the month the British Expeditionary Force had been cut off from the main body of the French army and was in headlong retreat to the Channel Ports, ending up at Dunkirk. The extent of the Germans' victory

came as something of a surprise. We had been fed carefully edited accounts of strategic withdrawals, brave fighting retreats and severe damage being caused to the enemy by the Blenheims and Battles of the RAF. I only realised that matters were at all serious when the Germans' capture of Amiens was announced on the wireless. For the first time Harry showed great concern. I had a war map on the wall; he went to it and studied it intently. "They never got Amiens last time", he said, "there's nothing to stop them now".

The BEF was evacuated from Dunkirk, the French asked for an armistice and Britain stood alone. The one thing this country was good at in WW2 was propaganda and the dissemination of controlled information: we even had a Ministry of Information. One of the effects of this is that we have come to believe as gospel truth things which were no more than stories, carefully tailored to keep the civil population happy and, above all, loyal. Dunkirk was the classic case. The worst defeat ever suffered by a British army was turned into "The Miracle of Dunkirk", not using the word "Victory" but hinting at it. If the Germans had wanted to they could have massacred the troops crowded into the Dunkirk perimeter, they had complete air superiority and large numbers of tanks, troops and field guns available. There have been many theories as to why they were content to stand by and watch the greater part of the BEF escape back to England, none have been accepted as fact. I should have thought by now that we should have learned the Germans' version of events, if so the Establishment has kept quiet about it. I have a nasty feeling that it doesn't put us in a very good light.

The British are said to be a modest and reticent people and to dislike boasting about their achievements. We do, however, like to be told how good we are and the Prime Minister set about doing this. Winston Churchill was never popular outside London and the Home Counties despite all the efforts of the propaganda machine. Too many people remembered Gallipoli in WW1 and the fact that he had not only ratted from the Conservatives to the Liberals but had later re-ratted back again. He was, however, a powerful orator and had a command of language which enabled him to produce memorable phrases which have gone into the popular folk lore of the British peoples' history in WW2. "Even if the British Empire lasts a thousand years men will say 'This was their finest hour'". "We will fight on the beaches, we will fight on the landing grounds, we will fight in the fields and in the streets, we will never surrender." "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few". These all went down very well, not only in Britain and the dominions but also in the United States. American sympathy to the Allied cause was crucial. British industry was simply not capable of producing the weapons which would be needed to defeat Germany or even to prevent Germany defeating us. Additionally we

were on the verge of bankruptcy and needed American finance to pay for the armaments and aircraft which were already being imported. Churchill was the only British politician capable of nurturing American sympathy and converting it into active participation in the war.

He was also the only senior politician who, contemplating our situation, would not, however reluctantly, decide that we had no option but to ask the Germans for an armistice as the French had done. To all intents and purposes we had lost the war. The Germans were just across the Channel, twenty two miles away, we were a sitting target for their bombers, it was only a matter of time before their invincible army invaded us as they had already invaded and occupied the Channel Islands. Hitler was thought secretly to admire the British and, if we played our cards right, might allow us generous terms.

Churchill must have considered the options. The Germans would certainly start bombing this country, virtually all of which was now within range of their airfields which now extended from Northern Norway to the French Atlantic coast. They wouldn't have it all their own way, however, the aircraft factories were turning out Spitfire and Hurricane fighters as fast as they could and a primitive form of radar (known as "radiolocation") was in operation. The next step might be an all-out invasion across the Channel, led by air-borne troops. Here the fact that the Germans had never expected such a complete victory was in our favour. They had relatively few JU52 troop-carrying aircraft, which were slow-moving and cumbersome and which would be easy targets for the RAF's fighters. The great mass of infantry, artillery and armour would have to cross the Channel in boats of some kind. The Germans were believed to favour barges towed by tugs, each pulling four or five, relying for protection during the five or six hour trip by the Luftwaffe. Churchill must have seen, with the information available to him, what the Germans' and particularly Hitler's assessment of the probabilities would be.

Even though the BEF was no longer a fighting force it was being rapidly re-grouped and re-equipped. There were large numbers of troops, including a Canadian division, in England who had never been in action. The RAF was growing in strength, modifications to the Spitfire improved its performance so that it was now superior to the BF109E, the Germans' principal fighter. The Royal Navy was still largely intact. The Germans would realise that the British would fight like demons to defend their island, using every means at their disposal including napalm, phosphorus, poison gas and biological weapons as well as high explosives. The vulnerable invasion force would be easy targets for the guns of the British battleships and cruisers and land-based artillery as well as every aircraft the British could lay hands on. There was also the unknown factor. Would the United States permit the British Isles to fall into German hands? The Germans might find themselves facing increasing numbers

of American troops, backed by the power of American industry.

Churchill must have calculated that he had nothing to lose by bluffing it out. If the worst came to the worst and the German bombing campaign was successful he might have to sue for peace, probably in early 1941. In the meantime the aircraft factories must be enlarged and re-organised under Government control, the Army must be re-equipped and, to supplement its efforts a force of civilian volunteers must be raised, trained and equipped, the propaganda machine must re-double its efforts to feed the British talent for self-delusion; he would have to do all in his power to draw the United States into the war.

My memories of the Summer of 1940 are very vivid. The weather was fine, school continued into August and Highfield gradually became better organised. I rode all over on my racing bike and spent a lot of time at Cleethorpes Bathing Pool, having learnt to swim in the tide at Suggitt's Lane. I played football and cricket with Ken Trushell and flew model aeroplanes, two of which I had made myself from balsa wood kits. We never again stayed at the bungalow after war started as the area was under military control. There were no air raids on Grimsby or Cleethorpes but air raid warnings sounded in the small hours nearly every night for weeks as the German bombers flew over on the way to attack Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool and back again. Gran and I would happily have stayed in bed but Aunt Evelynne insisted we go to the Anderson shelter which was damp and cold. Gran prepared flasks of tea and coffee to take with us. I haven't drunk Camp coffee since that time, I'm sure its taste would bring it all back. I remember switching the light on in the living-room in the middle of the night and surprising a large number of large black beetles (known as "black clocks"), climbing up the wall. They took precedence over the German bombers, we quickly swept them down and shovelled them on to the still smouldering coal fire where they sizzled to death.

We returned to school before the end of August to start the third year still in the huts at Highfield. Mr. Jackson, who had been headmaster since 1935 had resigned and a new head, Dr. J.H. Walter, was to take his place in the new year, other changes were known to be impending and wild rumours flew about. We were all moving back to Eleanor Street, the whole school was to be evacuated to Alford, Spilsby or Woodhall Spa, the school was to be closed and we were all to go to elementary schools. The truth, as usually happens, was far less dramatic but held several surprises none the less.

Another upheaval was about to take place at home. Harry had been awarded the tenancy of the Fireman's Arms at the corner of Albert and Thesiger Streets. This was a big step up for him; as manager of the Lincoln Arms he had been a salaried employee of Hewitt's Brewery, as a tenant he was his own boss and all profits were his. There was a drawback, of course, the Fireman's was an

alehouse, there was no licence to sell spirits. Apart from that his only restriction was to sell the beer supplied by the Tadcaster Tower Brewery. In addition to this it was decided that Gran and Aunt Evelynne should come to live with us at the Fireman's, ending my dual life between Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The move took place in late November. I had great misgivings about leaving Fuller Street and my friends there, principally the Trushells, matters being complicated by my having fallen in love with Ken's sister Marjorie who was about a year younger than Ken and had won a scholarship to Cleethorpes Girls' High School. My feelings were not reciprocated, however, and the young lady rebuffed my immature advances. I did manage to take her to the pictures once, accompanied by one of her friends (God knows what her parents, or she for that matter, thought I was going to do) and kissed her twice during a game of Postman's Knock at a Christmas party. She bit me both times in a completely non-erotic way, helped by her slightly protruding front teeth

Although the Fireman's Arms was in a slum area, the whole of which has been demolished and cleared long since, the living accommodation was superior to the Lincoln, which may have been the reason for Gran and Evelynne coming to live there. There were two large living rooms, four bedrooms and a separate kitchen, all newly decorated. The public part was much smaller than the Lincoln consisting of a bar and one large room with a grand piano on a small raised dais. It was much more homely than the Lincoln, the clientele being drawn from the surrounding streets. Two of the barmaids came with us from the Lincoln, Molly and Florrie, both respectable "good lasses", and were joined by a new girl, Florence. This lady was something of a mystery, being well-spoken and evidently well educated. We held long conversations about books and films. I was well on the way through Dickens by this time and she was reading Arnold Bennett, I remember her lending me a copy of "The Old Wives' Tale" and telling me to read "Riceyman Steps", which I greatly enjoyed. When the pub was quiet in the mornings I was allowed into the bar when not at school and liked to sit talking to Florence or Molly. Of the two I preferred Florence, she was prettier, wore shorter skirts and sat on a bar stool, giving me a generous view of her legs and, very occasionally, her underwear. I was beginning to feel the first stirrings of puberty and the barmaids played a large part in my imaginings. We had inherited the Fireman's Arms dog, Prince, a white Staffordshire bull terrier who had been badly treated by the previous tenant. He soon took to us and became my dog but Kitty was his boss. He wasn't the first pet we had, there had been a black spaniel, Rex, sundry cats, Gran had a canary and we had a green parrot which Harry had bought at a sale in 1938. This bird loved me and hated Harry. It would take a peanut from my lips and could hold a teaspoon full of tea in its claw, drinking it without spilling a drop.

When we first got it we allowed the parrot out of its cage to sit on my shoulder. One day Harry came into the room and started to speak to me; the bird jumped off my shoulder and flew at him, pecking him on the forehead, its hooked beak making a nasty gash. It was never allowed out of its cage again.

At the end of the Autumn term, 1940, we were told of a further reorganisation at school. Starting in the New Year the fourth, fifth and sixth forms were returning to Eleanor Street, together with two of the Third Forms, we were to revert to normal school hours and cease Saturday attendance. We were asked to state a preference between Latin, German, Physics and Chemistry. I was allocated to the Latin form-3A. I regret accepting this as I believe I would have been good at German. I am sure that if Harry had used his influence (publicans always had influence in Grimsby in those days), I would have been re-allocated. I suppose I should have made more fuss but I wasn't particularly bothered, at least I had avoided more than the bare minimum of the dreaded Physics, taught by a South African named Cunningham. He was the world's worst teacher of what should have been a fascinating subject, large parts of which I had to learn on the run when I started to work in industry. I am sure he would never have been employed at a school like Wintringham if it had not been for the War. I was never good at Latin but I learned more about basic grammar and syntax through being forced to learn it than I ever had through doing English and I must admit it came in useful when I had to learn basic Italian in a hurry in the Army.

The Latin and German third forms stayed at Highfield with the first and second forms. For two terms we enjoyed being the senior there and were expected to set an example to our juniors. We were in a small classroom in the House and I remember those two terms as my best time at school, marred only by my first encounter with the death of a fellow pupil. Jean Lister was a lively, vivacious girl with a mass of red curls. She wasn't pretty but made up for it by having a strong personality and a sharp wit. One Saturday morning in the Spring of 1941 she was riding her bike over Wellowgate level crossing alongside a lorry which had a loop of rope hanging over its side. As it drew past her this loop caught her handlebar, throwing her straight under the near-side rear wheel, which passed over her abdomen. She was not killed outright but suffered great pain before dying in hospital that afternoon. The accident was reported in the Telegraph so, by the time we assembled on the Monday morning, the whole class knew of it. Some of her friends and the class teacher went to the funeral and we were all subdued for some time. It was not the first time I had heard of children I knew dying, diphtheria, polio (Known as infantile paralysis), pneumonia and blood-poisoning were common child-killers in those days before immunization, antibiotics and the Salk vaccine. It was, however, the first time a classmate had died: it had a strong effect.

For several months I kept in touch with the Trushells, spending one or two evenings at their house each week, Ken visiting me at the Fireman's, but it couldn't last. We joined a YMCA Youth Club at Beacontorpe Methodist Church. The main activity was table-tennis, at which I was hopeless, and nearly all the others had left school, like Ken, and entered the adult world of smoking, swearing and telling dirty jokes. I had smoked several cigarettes by then, knew all but one of the swearwords, ("bastard"-I thought it meant the serf who basted the meat roasting in the kitchen of a mediaeval castle), and knew all about the facts of life. I wasn't priggish but had a sense that I wasn't old enough for such things yet and found them embarrassing. Sometime in May, 1941, I told Ken about this and suggested that we should leave the Youth Club. He said that I could if I wanted to, adding for good measure that Marjorie, for whom I still nursed an unrequited passion, was going out with a young man called (I am not making this up) Jimmy Donkersloot, in the sixth form at Clee Grammar. I left the Youth Club and never saw or heard from Ken Trushell again.

Kitty became ill again about this time and went into hospital to have a tumour removed from her breast. When she came home it was decided that that she should go away for a holiday, taking me with her. I was given permission to have a week off school in the circumstances and we went to Blackpool towards the end of June. I can date it fairly precisely because we were there when the Germans invaded Russia. I loved Blackpool because it had a large tram system with modern, streamlined cars, most of which are still running. Jack's family were living in Cleveleys, a suburb of Blackpool and I went to visit him. He was attending Fleetwood Grammar but was moving to Rossall, a public school, after the summer holidays. I enjoyed seeing him again and hearing his stories of his new, co-educational, school and the sexually precocious activities of his Lancashire schoolmates. I remember being impressed by the fact that the girls wore green knickers, called "kecks" in the local dialect.

Kitty made a good recovery and started a weekly visit to Aunt Did, who still lived at 63, Stirling Street. She had married George Bradley in 1917 and had three children, Frank and Peter, by this time both in the Army, and a daughter, Pam, who was a few months older than me. I started accompanying Kitty and enjoyed visiting the rambling Victorian house with its large back garden. Pam was a tall, blonde girl, quite pretty but painfully thin. Kitty was worried about this and the fact that she hadn't started developing "legs and things". Considering my susceptibilities towards the barmaids and Marjorie Trushell it is strange that I never felt the slightest attraction towards Pam. I enjoyed talking to her, she had left school and was working as a typist

in a solicitor's office, but that was it.

At the start of the Autumn Term, 1941, the class moved to Eleanor Street and became 4 Latin. Some genius had devised a six-day rota for the school. The first day of term was day 1 and if it was eg a Monday, Tuesday was Day 2 and so on, the following Monday becoming Day 6, Tuesday Day 1 etc. It worked surprisingly well but I still can't see what advantages it gave. I had my second experience of the death of a contemporary in the early weeks of the term. A boy named Dennis Dunn caught blood poisoning from an infected insect bite and died. The Headmaster announced the dismal news at morning assembly and we sang the dirge-like hymn "Jesu Lover of My Soul". I didn't know the deceased boy very well, he was in another form, but, cycling along Hainton Avenue, where his home was, I passed his funeral cortège, which had just left the house. The flower-covered coffin was white, the first one I had seen, and the flowers gave off a sickly smell. The scene preyed on my mind and I spent a sleepless night, the funeral and particularly the small, white coffin slowly passing down Hainton Avenue over and over again to the tune of "Jesu Lover of My Soul" whenever I closed my eyes. For some days I was severely disturbed. My parents had intended to go on holiday together but I begged Kitty not to go, breaking down in tears. She stayed at home and Harry went on his own. I gradually recovered but for some years I would go out of my way to avoid passing near a funeral or a cemetery.

Britain had survived another year of the war. The German bombing campaign had failed in its aims although London and the large provincial cities had been badly damaged and thousands of people killed. Grimsby had a few raids, none of them very serious. The only one I can remember clearly took place one Thursday lunchtime. I was sitting in the kitchen with Gran when we heard an aircraft pass over very low followed by a loud explosion which shook the house then two others, further away. Then the air raid warning went. The first bomb had fallen on Burgon's grocery shop on the corner of Kent Street and Freeman Street, which was fortunately empty as it was early closing day. The second bomb landed in the Royal Dock and the third fell on Cleethorpe Road, near the Albion Hotel, failed to explode and bounced three times along the road before smashing into the front of a shop and exploding, killing two people.

Japan bombed Pearl Harbour on December 7th and invaded the Phillipines, bringing America into the war at last. They also invaded Malaya, inflicting further defeats on the tottering British Army to follow those in North Africa, Greece and Crete. Our only victories were against Iran and the Vichy French in Syria, a campaign fought mainly by the Australians and New Zealanders and

noted for the extremely bitter fighting.

For a few days it was not clear whether the Americans were going to be our ally against Germany. Hitler solved the problem, however, by declaring war on America. I have never understood why he did this. He had an alliance with Japan, certainly, but they had done nothing to help Germany in the war against Russia and, until December 7th, had left the British colonies in the Far East alone. President Roosevelt would have had a difficult task to persuade the American public to make war against Germany when it was the Japanese who had attacked their fleet and had invaded American-held territory. Either way they were in the war at last and Churchill could sleep easy in his bed knowing that American military, industrial and financial power would once again turn the trick as they had done in 1918.

In the Spring of 1942 we moved again, this time to the Railway Hotel, near the Docks Station, another tenancy but which had a full licence. It was a ramshackle Victorian building, three-storied, which had, at one time, been a residential hotel as opposed to a pub. The living quarters were quite comfortable and were on two floors. The public part was larger than the Fireman's, with a bar and two large rooms. Only one of the barmaids, Molly, came with us to the Railway, Florrie stayed at the Fireman's and Florence had joined the WAAFs. I quite liked the Railway, I had a large room for a study cum playroom and was fascinated by the trains passing to and fro over the Docks Crossing. The noise of the trains never bothered any of us that I can remember. Various new barmaids came and went. The Railway was a much less respectable pub than the Fireman's and I was never allowed into the public parts during opening hours so I never got to know any of them as well as Florence and Molly, who soon left to get married. I still missed Cleethorpes and often went that way on my bike. I never saw any of the Trushells and never really wanted to. I was beginning to learn a useful, if bleak, lesson—that friendship depends on times and places and having things in common. I had made a friend at school Jimmy Day, a small, red-haired boy who was always near the top of the class. He came to the Railway for the evening and we sometimes did our homework together, when my marks distinctly improved.

Although we only lived at the Fireman's Arms for less than eighteen months it was a significant time in my life which stands out in my memory. It was my first experience of living as a family, Gran, Evelynne, Kitty, Harry and I living together. I never lost my regret at leaving Cleethorpes and my separate life although I soon replaced the friends I had there. I felt the first stirrings of eroticism towards Florence and Molly and was nearing puberty. I had a smattering of the mechanics of sex without any clear idea of how theory was converted into practice.

One further memory of the Fireman's-the grand piano in the Singing Room was played by a professional musician called Albert. He had a day job in local government and played the piano for beer money two or three evenings a week. Gran's piano had accompanied us to the Fireman's and I often played it in a rudimentary way as I had in Fuller Street. In those days it was usual for such children as me to take piano lessons. I can't remember this ever being suggested and I imagine it was because Kitty realised that I was unlikely to persevere with the disciplines of piano practice and it would be a waste of money. I suppose this was true but I have always regretted not being able to play the piano and having no theoretical knowledge of music.

In the early summer of 1942, going into the Regal Cinema, I saw three soldiers in strange khaki uniforms, much smarter than ours; they carried respirator cases with "U.S." stencilled on them. The Yanks had arrived in Grimsby. For the next three years they were in the area in increasing numbers, most of them in the Army Air Corps which soon became the United States Air Force at a new airfield at Goxhill with an Engineer unit at Immingham docks. A former department store in the Old Market Place was turned into the American Red Cross almost overnight and the Yanks became familiar figures in the town, their Military Police impressive with their white helmets, truncheons and hand guns in leather holsters. The presence of large numbers of Americans in the area increased the Americanisation to which I had been subjected for several years, principally by the movies but also by the influence of "Life", "Look", "Saturday Evening Post" and "Colliers" which Kitty's hairdresser obtained regularly and lent me. These magazines were far more informative about the real United States than Hollywood was and gave a different viewpoint on current events from that favoured by the Ministry of Information.

Jimmy Day's mother was a widow and needed every penny she could earn by dressmaking, he left school at Easter 1942 to become an office boy, the pittance he earned being a valuable supplement to their income. I still saw him but less frequently. During the Summer term I became friendly with Ken Francis and spent a lot of time at his house which was adjacent to Weelsby Road subway, not far from Jack's. Like Jack he never came to visit me at my Dockland home, not for the snobbish reasons which moti-

vated Mr. and Mrs. Moore but because his parents, being staunch Baptists, disapproved of strong drink and the public houses in which it was sold. His father was a lay preacher, Captain of a company of the Boys' brigade and a teetotaler who would have died rather than sit drinking in the best room at the Lincoln Arms, as for betting on the colour of the barmaids' knickers...! They were kind people, however, and always made me welcome although I was rarely offered refreshment of a meagre kind. I used to think this was due to frugality, imposed by their religion, but I now believe it was because they must have been among the few people in Grimsby ^{who} had no dealings with the Black Market and relied on the Government's rationing system to keep them ~~fed~~

As might be expected, Harry had several contacts who kept him supplied with eggs, butter, cheese and, particularly scarce, cream as well as petrol and anything else he wanted. We lacked for nothing. I am not proud of this, I was ashamed of it at the time and was fool enough to make my opinion known to Harry as he set off on one of his trips to Market Rasen, where the goodies originated. He just said "You'll learn" and I have. I hope, in similar circumstances, that I would look after my family as well as he did. One factor I didn't know about for several years was that he was "in with the cops". and so lived a charmed life, getting away with things that could have got him in serious trouble. This stemmed from an evening in the Summer of 1941 when Harry and a fellow publican called Fred Miles, who kept the Crown and Anchor in Freeman Street, drove out to the countryside to see what they could find. Having transacted their business they stopped at an inn on the Low Road to Louth, near the village of Covenham. Shortly after they had settled themselves to discuss the evening's work the familiar figure of the Chief Constable of Grimsby entered the bar, accompanied by a lady other than his wife. The four people recognised each other and, without preamble, the Chief Constable told them that his car had broken down nearby and it was imperative that he return to Grimsby as soon as possible. The two publicans were happy to oblige, the Chief Constable and his lady friend were carried back to town and dropped at a suitably discreet place and from then on Harry Gifford and Fred Miles enjoyed the co-operation of the Borough Police.

Ken and I spent the Summer together, swimming at Cleethorpes Bathing Pool, going to the pictures, riding about on our bikes and playing tennis at Barret's Recreation Ground. He had a twin

sister, Heather, who was utterly charmless. In later life she became a Norland Nannie and eventually married a Chief Engineer on the P&O Line.

One evening in the Autumn of 1942 Jimmy Day came to see me. We went into my upstairs room, played records on my portable gramophone and chatted about his job and school. Inevitably the subject got round to sex. By this time I had achieved puberty but my experiences were entirely solitary. I had plenty of barmaids and schoolteachers to fantasize about but still no practical knowledge of what actually went on between men and women which caused a certain vagueness at critical moments. Jimmy knew a lot more than I did thanks to his adult male and female colleagues at work, who frequently let nuggets of information drop. He knew about periods, French letters and coitus interruptus, which was the most common method of birth control at that time and helped to account for the high birth rate. I am sure that he didn't use that term but I can't remember what he called it. It was still popular in the fifties and accounts for the existence of the two of you.

Jimmy enlarged on the subject of sex and announced that he and one of our schoolfellows had masturbated each other in an outside toilet, several times. He looked at me enquiringly, undid his flies and exposed his erect penis. As he did so the door opened and Gran looked in the room. Fortunately the settee we were sitting on had its back to the door so she couldn't see exactly what was going on and Jimmy had the presence of mind to bend forward and adjust **himself** while I went to the door to see what Gran wanted and get rid of her.

To this day I don't know what I would have done if Gran hadn't appeared at that critical juncture. She may have saved me from becoming a raving poofster. In a long lifetime that was my only homosexual experience. I've known several over the years but none of them ever made any attempts on my virtue and I never wanted them to. I've never been sexually attracted to other men, straight or gay.

Jimmy soon went home and I didn't see him again for over twenty years when he came to a productivity meeting at BTP. I wasn't involved but the meeting included lunch in the canteen and he walked past my table. We nodded and smiled, no more. I imagine the same thought passed through his mind as passed through

mine. I never told Dorothy about this incident, I wish I had, it would have amused her.

About this time I acquired a new hobby. I had lost interest in stamp collecting and had become bored with making model aircraft. I saw an advertisement in a magazine for the Light Railway Transport League, an organisation devoted to the study and furtherance of trams. I became a member, receiving a monthly magazine called the "Modern Tramway. At that time most large towns and cities still had tram systems so I had plenty to go at. I started collecting pictures of trams and buses, maps of the various systems and also tram and bus tickets, which had not degenerated into the badly printed paper strips they are today.

I also became involved in politics. My interest in Russia had continued after my vain attempts to learn the language and had increased when Russia underwent an overnight change from being a potential enemy controlled by a totalitarian regime dominated by a dictator little better than Hitler into our glorious ally. The Red Army stopped the Germans at Malo Yaroslavets, a Moscow tram terminus, just as winter closed in, and began to push them back. At least somebody could beat them. I wanted to do something to show support for the Russians and joined the Young Communist League. This sounds much more dramatic than it was. Apart from attending three or four meetings in the front room of one of the members, a fellow pupil at Wintringham, I took no part in any activities, subversive or otherwise. The main subject discussed was the organisation of a dance to raise funds. After a few weeks Ken Francis persuaded me to resign and accompanied me to the home of the secretary named (once again, I am not making this up), Harry Daddy. He allowed me to resign on payment of my outstanding subscriptions, about 50p.

For many years the school had a company of the Officers' Training Corps. Ken belonged to this organisation and attended its parades after school in the Corps uniform which was the pre-war service dress with brass buttons, a cheese-cutter cap, breeches and puttees. The cynical, would-be sophisticates like me sneered at the activities of the OTC until one morning, after prayers, the Headmaster announced a recruiting drive to increase its numbers. It was to be re-named the Junior Training Corps and to be issued with modern battle-dress uniforms. Day Six afternoon was to be devoted to parades. He thoughtfully added that those boys who didn't belong to it would take part in the country dancing being organised for the girls. A recruiting office would be opened in one of the classrooms immediately after the end of afternoon school. Virtually every boy in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth forms queued up to join, including me. The ones who didn't were nearly all members of the newly-formed

Air Training Corps or Sea Cadets. One or two sex-fiends preferred the Country Dancing for the increased contact with girls. I was soon issued with a uniform two sizes too big, which included the stupid forage cap which kept falling off. Aunt Did tailored the blouse and trousers to fit and I bought a pair of army boots at a shop in Freeman Street called Waudby's. Ken Francis, like the rest of the old soldiers still had to wear his 1914 uniform. In fact he looked much more soldierly than I did, I never got the gaiter/trouser connection right until I joined the real army where I learned about lead weights which were strictly forbidden but which everybody wore. The JTC loomed large for the rest of my school career, there were times when it seemed to be the main activity. The training was quite thorough as far as drill, weaponry and map reading were concerned but only on rare occasions did it bear any relationship to the real thing. I wish I had realised this at the time.

During 1942 two new barmaids came to the Railway-Lily and Hilda. Lily was only about 18, plump, pretty and a nice girl who often used to chat to me. Hilda was older, a slim, dark, heavily made-up woman in her thirties. She wore short skirts and high heels. I thought she was very attractive, I wasn't the only one.

My parents' marriage had started to deteriorate during the short time at the Fireman's Arms. I wonder now whether it had ever recovered from Harry's misadventure in Blackpool. He had started drinking at the Lincoln Arms during the early months of the war when he was warned by the police about contravening the blackout regulations and had to station himself in the entrance hallway during the evenings to make sure the temporary doors were closed as customers came and went. There was no way of heating this draughty spot and he took to drinking whisky to keep the cold out. After a few weeks the brewery sent their carpenters to erect a more efficient doorway, by which time he had developed a taste for whisky which lasted the rest of his life and helped to kill him. I don't think he was an alcoholic, just a heavy drinker like most publicans. He had a good head for drink, which I have inherited, and never showed how much he had had to drink by his gait, speech or behaviour. It never struck me at the time but he must also have been an exceptionally heavy smoker, perhaps a chain smoker, another element that helped to kill him. He and Kitty shared a bedroom but never showed any affection towards each other. Harry spent most of his limited spare time at one or other of his clubs betting on the horses or playing poker. One of his acquaintances told me years later that he could have been a professional gambler if he had wanted, a character trait I have not inherited.

I was now in the Fifth form at school, the year in which we took the School Leaving Certificate which, after the 1944 Education Act, became "O" Levels. To get a Certificate you had to pass in English Language and four other subjects. If you didn't attain this you had to take the whole thing over again. In the mock exams at the end of the Spring Term I just scraped a pass.

I have often wondered how the teaching staff reconciled my poor scholastic record with my high I.Q., which they must have known about. I have the feeling that they must have written me off as an under-achiever. In normal times I would probably have been given special treatment but under wartime conditions they had their work cut out to run the school on a bare minimum basis, the special cases like me had to get along as best they could. One day in early June, 1943, it must have been the Whitsun holiday as I wasn't at school, Kitty told me to pack my things; we were going to stay with Aunt Did at 63, Stirling Street. She had learned that for some time the barmaid Hilda had been Harry's mistress and she had had enough of it all. She would look for a house to rent so that Gran and Evelynne could come with us; in the meantime they would have to stay at the Railway. We set off walking to the bus stop at Riby Square. On the way we met two of the barmaids (they were both very pretty, one bottle blonde, the other brunette, I can't remember their names, they weren't "good lasses") and Kitty told them exactly what had happened, to make sure the story got a wide circulation.

To her great credit Aunt Did made us very welcome. I am sure Kitty had confided in her long before and our appearance with our suitcases didn't altogether surprise her. Luckily a large bedroom with twin beds was spare and we took up residence at Sea View Cottage as Kitty had done so often before.

I quickly settled in with the Bradleys. Aunt Did was a widow, her husband having died two years earlier, and lived alone with Pam. Her two sons were both in the Army—Peter in the Pay Corps at Leicester, Frank a Gunner in the Artillery in the Midlands. Sea View Cottage was much larger than the adjacent houses and had a big back garden which stretched back almost to Thorold Street; it had a two-storey brick outhouse, an apple and a pear tree. It was built in 1862 and had stood alone for several years until the rest of the area was built up. It had four large bedrooms, a front drawing-room, a very fine morning room with a French window and a large kitchen-living room. Unusually for its time and place it had a bathroom and a hot water system. The lavatory was outside, halfway down the garden, which was a drawback but not so bad as it might have been as the family used chamber-pots during the night.

Kitty soon returned to the Railway to work and keep an eye on things. She was the only person Harry trusted to work the till, such a consideration outweighed the question of who shared his bed. I continued at school—the School Certificate exams were approaching, for some reason the French Oral exam was

held on June 13th, almost a month before the main exams. During the small hours of that morning I was awakened by the clatter of something rolling down the tiles of the roof above my head and falling into the back yard. I leapt out of bed to the window which overlooked the yard just as a brilliant white flame shot out of what I could now see was an incendiary bomb. As we frantically dressed and ran downstairs the air raid warning sounded and several explosions could be heard. There was an Anderson shelter in the garden but, for some reason, nobody fancied it. We divided between the cupboard under the stairs and the kitchen table. Frank, who was home on leave, said most of the noise was anti-aircraft fire from the Docks. After a while all was quiet and we looked out of the back door. The incendiary bomb had burnt out harmlessly in the sink. It speaks well for the slates which roofed Sea View Cottage that it had failed to break them and burn me to a crisp, its trajectory must have been at the same angle as the roof, things might have been very different if the aircraft dropping it had been flying in a different direction. The area was illuminated by the glow and flames of a large fire in the direction of Riby Square. Kitty was worried about Gran and Evelynne at the Railway so Frank and I set off to see if they were all right. It was soon apparent where the fire was—the former Lawson and Stockdale department store which had been taken over by the Navy as a Base Headquarters. It was in Cleethorpe Road, opposite the Plaza cinema. As we crossed Albion Street I noticed a man about 30 yards away bend down to pick something up. There was a loud bang and the man was lying in a heap on the pavement. We stopped, then Frank said "Come on, we can't help him now" and we hurried on down Cleethorpe Road. As we neared the fire an Air Raid Warden stopped us. Frank explained that we had to get to Docks Station. I was wearing my JTC uniform and, since we appeared to be two soldiers, the Warden let us pass, warning us to be careful as something funny was going on. We hurried past the fire, keeping close to the wall of the Plaza. The heat was intense but we managed to get by and soon reached the Railway, which was undamaged, and found Gran and Evelynne in good spirits. We stayed for a cup of tea and returned to Sea View Cottage by way of the back streets, to avoid the fire.

The following morning I set off for school as usual. The raid had caused some damage, mainly through fire, but not enough to cause serious disruption. At school everyone exchanged stories of the raid, I made great play of my near miss with the incendiary bomb and the man I had seen blown up in Albion Street. At assembly the Head told us that a large number of anti-personnel bombs had been dropped. Initially these were metal cylinders, about 6" by 4". When they hit the ground a spring forced the cylinders apart longitudinally, exposing a smaller cylinder of explosive. Any vibration set off a trembler

fuse which detonated the explosive. Anyone walking near one could set it off, the explosion would kill or seriously injure them. We were to be extremely careful and, if we saw one of the bombs, to keep well away from it and to tell a policeman or Air Raid Warden. Posters were soon displayed all over the two towns. They had a picture of a bomb which showed the two halves of its cylinder open, exposing the lump of explosive. The halves looked like wings and the devices soon became known as "butterfly bombs". We soon got used to the sound of explosions and the appearance of Royal Engineer bomb disposal squads in the streets. I never saw one of the bombs except, of course, the one which had killed the man in Albion Street.

Being so small, the butterfly bombs lurked in dark corners of the town for years, at least one being found in the false roof of a house being demolished in the slum clearances of the sixties. Perhaps there are still one or two left. Years after the war the "Telegraph" printed an article about the raid of June 13th, 1943. It explained that the Germans chose Grimsby for the first bombs as it was isolated from other centres of population and the effect would soon be clear. British Intelligence had a choice; did they bring the town to a stop for God knew how long whilst the bomb disposal squads combed the area, dealing with the bombs or did they allow the life of the town to go on, knowing that a number of people would be killed and injured as a result. Presumably the first alternative would be exactly what the Germans wanted. They had no option and, apart from the presence of the bomb disposal squads and the occasional explosion, life went on as usual and a lot of people were killed and injured. Looking back, it seems remarkable that we accepted the situation as just another wartime inconvenience to be put up with. I can't help wondering whether the phlegmatic character of the people of the two towns had something to do with it. A more volatile population might not have taken things so calmly. I suppose if such a thing happened now a day we should divide our time between suing the army for not shooting the Luftwaffe planes down and being counselled to remove the terrible stress we should all be suffering. From the Germans' point of view the bombs had been a failure and they never used them again.

Despite the general excitement the French Oral exam took place, my turn coming in the early afternoon. The examiner greeted me in French and gave me a passage in a book to read aloud, which I did. He then asked me, "Que faisiez-vous à deux heures ce matin?". I suddenly found that I could converse in French. It was the first time I had done so and I enjoyed it. The examiner occasionally supplied words outside my vocabulary. I felt I had done well.

Shortly after the June 13th air raid Kitty returned to the Railway to live. She never explained her change of mind which I imagine had a lot to

do with money. Aunt Did allowed me to stay at Sea View Cottage, which I very much wanted to do, the thought of returning to the Railway and unavoidable contact with Harry appalled me. I had decided to leave school at the end of term and get a job to last the two years until I was called up, preferably a long way from Grimsby.

During the night of July 13th, 1943, Grimsby had its heaviest air raid. This time the warning sounded before the raid began. There were few, if any incendiaries, mostly high explosive bombs. We were all in the quite roomy cupboard under the stairs and could hear explosions in all directions, none of them very close. Suddenly there was a much louder bang from the direction of the docks followed by a second, even louder. Then I heard the awful sound of a bomb heading straight for me. It started as a faint whistle which increased to a scream accompanied by a dull rumble like the sound of an express train approaching at speed. I thought that this was it: we were about to die. I hoped it would be over quickly. The bomb exploded with the loudest sound I had ever heard. The house shook, there was the tinkle of breaking glass from somewhere outside and then silence. The house had not been touched. We were all right.

That was the only time I was frightened in an air raid. The bomb fell on the Strand cinema in Park Street, about 400 yards away, reducing it to a heap of rubble. The raid caused a lot of damage but relatively few casualties. The Tivoli theatre went, as did a large part of the Public Library and the Bus Depot, along with several buses. The Railway was unharmed, Kitty, Gran and Evelynne were all right, Harry had been absent on duty as an Air Raid Warden or at least that was the official version, God knows where he was in actual fact.

In the morning I set off in my JTC uniform to the Municipal Offices to attend duty as a Post-Raid Messenger, which we were all called upon to do. I was met at the door by a member of the sixth form, Len Blau, who was a Staff Sergeant in the Corps and spoke the language which went with the rank. "What are you doing here, Gifford?", he greeted me, "aren't you supposed to be doing School Cert?"; I agreed that I was, the English Language exam was due to start in about ten minutes time. "You bloody idiot!", he cried, "there's sod all to do here. Fuck off to school, quick!". I did as ordered and arrived at school just in time to take the exam, the only one I remember clearly, apart from the French Oral. I might as well not have bothered to take the Maths and General Science Exams and knew I had failed them hopelessly. I wasn't so sure about the Latin and English Literature. The Latin teacher, Miss Margaret Waugh, a Scottish lady, made it obvious that she had a low opinion of me, perhaps because of my under-achieving. She had no way of knowing that I had a very different opinion of her. She was about 30, fair haired and almost pretty with bright blue eyes and a trim figure. She wore high-heeled shoes

and a range of short, tight skirts which meant that those of us in the front row were occasionally treated to generous views of her legs and underwear; I particularly remember a pair of peach silk knickers. She frequently figured in my nocturnal fantasies. Regrettably, my admiration for her didn't cause me to apply my energies to Latin; not that it would have done me any good in the direction I would have liked if I had.

Considering that I had read much more widely than my contemporaries I should have done well at Literature. Unfortunately our two set books were "Eothen", by A.W. Kinglake and "Long Ago and Far Away" by W.H. Hudson, two of the dullest books ever written, or so it seemed to me at the time. I managed to read one of them (I can't remember which) but not the other, which put me at something of a disadvantage in the exam. I made up for it by answering questions on one of the other set books—"Kipps", by H.G. Wells, which I had read and enjoyed. Wells was one of my favourite authors and his political views strongly influenced me; they do today.

Once School Cert. was over little work was done until the end of term. The exam results weren't due until the end of September and at least one day was devoted to a JTC field day and tests for the Cert. "A" exams, parts 1 and 2. I passed part 1 but had to have two years service in before I could take the part 2, by which time I should have left school behind me. I imagined I should leave the JTC as I had joined it—a private soldier.

Two things occupied me during the last days of the Summer Term. I had written after a job I had seen advertised in the "Daily Telegraph" in the temporary reading room of what was left of the Public Library. It called for a young man, school leaver preferred, to learn the business side of the catering trade. The address for applications was the Hungaria Restaurant in Regent Street, W.1. The Hungaria is long gone but was well known at that time for its orchestra which broadcast frequently on the BBC. Its main attraction for me, of course, was that it was in London and a long way from Grimsby. The other item was Frank Bradley's wedding. He was marrying a girl who lived near his camp in the depths of Worcestershire, not far from Evesham. The lady's name was Amy Wilkins, she had stayed at Sea View Cottage where everybody liked her, particularly Kitty. She was slim, fair, quite pretty with big blue eyes and a beautiful, soft voice with just enough West Midlands to make our Grimsby accents seem harsh and ugly (I didn't think this applied to me, however, being under the delusion that I spoke Standard English). She had been to Grammar School in Evesham and worked as a senior clerk in the firm of Terrys, spring manufacturers, in Redditch. Kitty and I had been invited to the wedding which was to be held in the parish church at Amy's home village, Rous Lench, one of a pair of villages known as "The Lenches", the other being Church Lench

a mile or so away. The journey involved almost military planning, what would be an easy morning's drive today was a complicated operation in 1943 and long discussions were held as to the best way to proceed. One thing was certain—we should never do it in one day.

The last day of term arrived and those of us leaving school were given a farewell address by Dr. Walter in the Music Room. He spoke of the perils and temptations of the adult world we were about to enter. I can't remember his exhorting us to remember the moral values and high ethical standards we had learned at Wintringham; we should have had a job—we hadn't learned any: this must have been one of the bits of the syllabus eliminated by the war. I couldn't remember any mention of such things in all the years I had been there. Certainly we had endured a weekly lesson called "Religious Instruction" which was dropped after the fourth year. It was devoted to bible studies and there was no attempt to convert those of us who had no religious home background. I had never been sent to Sunday School, like most of my schoolfellows, and religion played no part in my home life. I don't think Gran had any religious belief at all, Kitty had been confirmed as a girl but, like Harry and Evelynne, only attended church for weddings and funerals. I had distinguished myself at the age of eight, when I joined the Wolf Cubs by not knowing which religion I belonged to. The Cub Mistress (Bargera) managed to settle the matter by asking me if I had been baptised. I didn't know what the word meant until she asked, "You know, what church were you christened at?" I remembered Kitty saying that I had been christened at St. James's church. "That's all right then", she cried, "you're C of E". It was several years before I realised what C of E meant and that I had been baptised into the Church of England. I didn't like Cubs much, I couldn't get the hang of tying knots—the bowline on a bight completely defeated me: I lasted about six weeks. The only religious activity I enjoyed was singing the hymn during morning assembly at school. Wintringham had its own hymnbook; whoever put it together knew his stuff as it had all the best hymns, which we sang to the best, most familiar tunes. This had nothing to do with religion, however, I would have enjoyed singing music hall songs even better. By the time I left school I was a convinced atheist and nothing I have experienced in the fifty years since has done anything to alter that opinion. Like a lot of atheists, however, I like churches and seem to have a greater knowledge of the Bible than many Christians; the Religious Instruction lessons must have done some good after all.

Leaving school was an anti-climax after School Certificate. For all practical purposes it was the start of the Summer Holidays. I received a letter from the Hungaria Restaurant inviting me to attend an interview the following week. I remember little about the trip to London, the interview, the man who conducted it or the questions he asked. Whatever they were, I must have answered them correctly and made a good impression, because he offered me the job on the spot at a salary of £1-15 per week. With hindsight I believe I was the only applicant. Even by 1943 standards the salary was derisory for a job in the West End. In those days, however, someone learning a trade or profession (sometimes called an "improver") could not expect the full salary for the job until he was considered to be fully trained, perhaps after several years experience and several exams. His parents were expected to subsidise him. I was to start at the end of August, after Frank and Amy's wedding.

I was regarded enviously by friends and acquaintances who were staying on at school or were starting humdrum jobs which would eventually lead to their becoming solicitors, chartered accountants or estate agents. Some poor souls were being forced to enter the family business. The Hungaria Restaurant in the West End of London sounded very glamorous. I kept quiet about the £1-15 per week even though it was more than most of the other improvers were getting; the average seemed to be £1. Ken Francis was staying at school for at least the Autumn Term, after which he hoped to become a cadet in the Police Force.

I passed the first week or so of August happily with Ken at our usual amusements until it was time to set off for Rous Lench. It had been decided that I should travel before everyone else with Aunt Did's younger son Peter, who had been on leave and had to return to Leicester, where he was stationed. Like the rest of his comrades in the Pay Corps he was in a civvy billet, having the great good fortune to live in his grandmother's house in Fosse Road, a respectable district of large terrace houses, not far from the city centre. I was to stay there for a couple of days until the rest of the party arrived to stay overnight and then proceed to Rous Lench. I liked Leicester, it seemed a lively, prosperous place and, best of all, had a large tram system, one of whose routes ran along Fosse Road. I spent most of my time riding about on the trams, going to the pictures and reading "David Copperfield" and Thackeray's "Pendennis", which I had bought for a few coppers in a large second-hand bookshop in the city centre. In due course Kitty, Aunt Did and Pam arrived and the following morning we departed on a Midland Red bus to Birmingham.

We passed through Coventry, which had been heavily bombed in 1940. I had been to London after the Blitz of 1940-41 and had seen the results of air raids far more serious than anything we had in Grimsby. Coventry seemed to

have been hit much harder than London because the damage was concentrated in a much smaller area. The centre of the city was devastated. The tram system had been abandoned because most of the trams had been destroyed and the lines blown up. Single storey prefabricated shops had been erected to provide some semblance of a shopping centre. Their raw newness with names like Woolworths, Marks and Spencers and Boots being displayed on premises hardly bigger than a corner shop made things worse. Birmingham seemed to have escaped serious damage and I was pleased to see its tall, narrow dark blue and white trams which ran on 3'6" gauge tracks. We changed there to another Midland Red bus which took us to Redditch where we were met by one of Amy's relatives in a horse-drawn two-wheeled trap. It was like stepping back in time, particularly when we left the town and plunged into the tree-lined lanes of Worcestershire. About six in the evening we reached Rous Lench. If we had expected romantic thatched cottages, we were soon disillusioned; the Wilkins lived in a modern semi-detached house with a driveway and a garage and, as we soon discovered a radiogram and an inside toilet. We were lodged at various houses in the village, Peter and I stayed with a charming, elderly lady who engaged us in a conversation about the relative sizes of fields in Worcestershire and Lincolnshire. It was rather one-sided as neither of us had the faintest idea what size the fields round Grimsby were or any inkling of what a four-acre field looked like. The next morning the vicar showed us round the mediaeval village church and said it was the first time he could remember Geordies being in the village. As tactfully as I could, I explained that Grimsby was in Lincolnshire, we were not Geordies. "Are you sure?" he asked in a surprised way, as if I had told him I had witnessed the Second Coming in New Street, Birmingham, on the journey down. He disappeared into the vestry, returning after a moment with an RAC book which soon convinced him that Grimsby was, in fact in Lincolnshire and that I did actually know which county I lived in. "I do apologise", he said, "I must have been getting mixed up with Hartlepool". I didn't know it at the time but the people of that town aren't Geordies either.

It was the first wedding I had been to and I remember nothing about it. Everyone agreed that it was a lovely ceremony and the Vicar, despite his poor grasp of English geography, conducted the service faultlessly. In the churchyard afterwards, while the photographs were being taken, I was smoking a cigarette (I had started smoking regularly some months before), along with several others. The Vicar, puffing a briar pipe, approached me and said I should stop smoking immediately as I had a fine, baritone voice, which should be trained. Tobacco would ruin it. I put my cigarette out, to be courteous, and thanked him for his advice. In the years which have followed nobody has ever complimented me on my voice; on a management course once I was told that I had a hard, nasal voice which antagonised people.

The reception was held in the village hall. There was an informal buffet, laden with the sort of goodies which were rarely seen in towns. A large quantity of roast beef, two hams and cold roast pork with crackling, fresh-baked bread, hot sausages, strawberries and cream. I gorged myself to a standstill, as did the rest of the Grimsby party. The wedding cake was cut, there were speeches followed by dancing to a trio of piano, violin and accordion. I couldn't dance a step but passed the time pleasantly smoking, drinking home-made potato wine which couldn't have been very strong as it didn't seem to have any effect, and watching the goings-on, particularly during the Gay Gordons when the girls' skirts flared up. Something puzzled me then and recurred on odd occasions for the next five years until I learned about cami-knickers. A vivid memory is of Kitty being in great demand to dance with the many middle-aged and elderly Wilkins uncles and family friends. During the evening we went back to the Wilkins' house where there was more to eat and drink. I fell into conversation with Amy's youngest sister, Monica, a very pretty girl of nineteen with red-gold hair and Amy's soft, musical voice. We seemed to have a lot in common, both being film fans and voracious readers. At some time we began kissing. We would talk for a while and then kiss as a sort of punctuation of the conversation, carrying on talking after each kiss, I don't remember how many there were, a dozen perhaps. It was very enjoyable but completely innocent and sexless. There was nothing surreptitious about it as we were in full view of the assembled company, who took no notice. Monica told me she had been invited to visit Sea View Cottage the following year and hoped to see me there. Why she made such a fuss of the callow, fifteen-year-old I then was I don't know, I was too inexperienced to press the matter. I don't think she ever visited Grimsby, if she did I never met her.

The journey back was uneventful. We stayed overnight again in Leicester and arrived back in Grimsby during the late afternoon. The following Sunday I set off for London to start work. Harry shook hands and gave me £5, Kitty gave me £2 and she and Gran went to the Docks station to see me off. I had booked myself into the London Youth Hostel which, at that time was in Highgate. Following the Youth Hostels Association's handbook's instructions, eventually, in the early afternoon, hot, hungry and thirsty, I arrived at the hostel, a large house standing in its own grounds. I rang the bell and after a minute or two the door opened and a grey-haired man wearing a dark blue suit, carpet slippers and a collarless white shirt addressed me. "You know quite well we don't open till four o'clock, it's in the book. Go away and come back after four". I had only wanted to leave my suitcase and told him so. "No, can't take the responsibility. Sorry!", he said and slammed the door. I walked gloomily

down to Archway to get something to eat and drink.

In recent years I have come to know the area quite well. There are several fast food outlets, the pubs all serve hot and cold food. At half past two on a Sunday afternoon in 1943, however, not a snack bar, restaurant, pie and mash shop, jellied eel stall or pub was open; there weren't even slot machines selling bars of chocolate, which were now rationed. I was away from home with a vengeance. If I had had the sense to get back on the Underground and travel to the West End I should have found plenty of places open—even Lyons Corner House—but, having found the Youth Hostel I didn't want to run the risk of losing it and suppressed the pangs of hunger with cigarettes, which didn't really help much as I didn't inhale. Eventually four o'clock struck and I toiled back up the hill. This time the door was open and I entered a large hallway to be greeted once again by the Warden, now in shirt sleeves. He shuffled ahead of me into a small office and gave me the registration book to fill in. ~~He read what I had written and shook his head.~~ He read what I had written and shook his head, "Come here to work, have you?, you can't live here beyond the week, you know, that'll be 17/6d. You must be out ~~at~~ on Saturday morning." I handed him the money and digested the news that I should not be able to live there. I had made it the basis of my finances. Perhaps the Hungaria people might know of somewhere as cheap. He directed me to the male dormitory on the first floor. It was a large room, looking out over a large, overgrown garden with several trees. There were a number of two-tier bunk beds, one of which had a large suitcase on it, the rest appeared to be unoccupied. I selected one near the window and sat down. Like the others it was provided with a mattress, three blankets and a pillow. I laid my case on it. On the wall opposite me was a notice-board with two foolscap sheets pinned to it. One was a list of instructions in Air Raid Precautions, Fire Watching and Fire Drill. The other, grubby and tattered, was a list of hostel rules. Most of it was a reiteration of the handbook except for the ~~section~~ section of greatest interest to me—the times of meals. On Sundays supper was at six o'clock, I had almost two hours to wait. I took out a cigarette and read the last item on the sheet—"No Smoking In The Dormitories". I put my Gold Flake away.

I laid on the bed and a wave of homesickness flowed over me. The hostel seemed a forbidding, comfortless place; perhaps it was a good thing that I should not be able to live there. I wondered just what I had got myself into. With these morose thoughts in mind I fell fast asleep, waking with a start to find a tall young man, older than me, looking down at me. He had sparse, fair hair, steel-framed glasses and was wearing a sports jacket and slacks with an open-necked blue shirt. "Hello", he said, "you've had a good kip, I was just going to wake you up". I asked him what time it was. "Five past six", he replied, "are you going down to supper?". I said that I was and asked if he knew where

the dining room was."You mean the Refectory",he said,"it's downstairs,next to the Common Room,there's a sign."He spoke with a strong Welsh accent and introduced himself;for the life of me I can't remember his name but I do remember that he came from Aberdare.I told him my name and where I came from."Grimsby,eh?",he replied,"I thought there was something fishy about you", and grinned at this shaft of wit.In years to come I was to become used to to this sort of remark;Grimsby was noted for two things-fish and football, mainly fish.Time and time again people would trot out the same old jokes,expecting me to laugh as if it was the first time I had heard this screamingly funny wisecrack.I smiled,to be sociable and bit back a remark about Welshmen and thieves.

Taffy, for lack of his real name, wasn't going down to supper, having had his tea in town. I went downstairs and found the Refectory, a large room with several tables covered with oilcloth. One of them was set with knives and forks and a basket filled with slices of bread. I sat down and began to eat the bread, which was stale. By this time I would have eaten it if it had been covered in green mould. I quickly emptied the breadbasket, at which point the door opened and the Warden looked in. "Have you eaten all the bread?", he asked. I nodded, my mouth full. "You're only supposed to have two slices, there's a war on, you know. That'll be a shilling extra." I gave him a shilling which he pocketed. He went away and a middle-aged woman in an apron entered with two plates; one of them contained two slices of Spam, two cold boiled potatoes and a few sprouts, also cold. The other plate was covered with a slimy white substance which turned out to be tapioca. I wolfed this horrid meal down with relish; in ten minutes I had finished and went back upstairs to the dormitory. Taffy was lying on his bed, reading the "Sunday Pictorial", which he put down as I entered. He asked if it was my first visit to the hostel and remarked that he had been several times. He had come to London for a few days holiday before joining the RAF, having been called up. I told him my story and he seemed to be impressed by my new job. "London's the place", he said, "towns like ours are no good if you want to get on, they're all the same, Grimsby, Aberdare, all of them. It's not what you know, it's who you know. If you're not in the Magic Circle you've had it. Is your Dad a Mason?", I had only the vaguest idea what a Mason was but I did know that Harry wasn't one and said so. "That's it, then. You've done the best thing possible by getting out of it. The sky's the limit in London, everything's here. If I get on all right in the RAF I shall sign on; if not I'll come back here."

I didn't realise it at the time but it was the most sensible, realistic and truthful piece of advice I have ever been given. He had summed up life in small-town Britain in a few sentences. I have often wondered how he got on in the RAF and whether he he found success in London. We went downstairs to the Common Room where there ~~was a piano~~

was a wireless set, which Taffy switched on. We listened for a while until the Warden poked his head round the door. "Lights out in half an hour", he said, came into the room and switched the wireless off. We returned to the dormitory. Taffy had been to the hostel several times. "Don't bother about the Warden", he said, "he's not such a bad old bloke really. Did he make you pay for extra bread?", I said that he had. Taffy laughed. "Old bugger, he's supposed to throw stale bread into the pigswill bin, instead he sells it to us. He's got the DSO and MC, you know, and the Croix de Guerre. He was a Colonel in the last war, in the trenches, wounded several times." I pondered this information as I made up my bed, which was surprisingly comfortable. We chatted for a while and Taffy told me that we were the only residents that night, a large party was expected on Monday from an Edinburgh high school, all girls. "We'll be all right there", he said, "Good night". Things brightened up a bit and I looked forward to the following evening, soon falling asleep.

I woke early in the morning, washed, dressed and went downstairs in search of breakfast. Taffy was still asleep. It was a quarter to seven by the hall clock and there was a strong smell of burnt toast. The Warden appeared, holding a sweeping brush. "Sweep round the hall and Common Room, will you?, there's a shovel and rubbish bin down the corridor", he said, yawning and handing me the brush. I remembered that hostel residents were expected to help with cleaning and tidying and set to work, which didn't take long as the place was quite clean to start with. By the time I had finished sweeping and eaten the toast and marmalade which was breakfast it was half past seven. I decided to make my way to the West End. I arrived at Leicester Square an hour early, not being due at the Hungaria until nine. It was a fine morning so I passed the time looking in the shops and supplementing my breakfast in a snack bar. I reported to the Hungaria dead on time; the only person about was the lift boy, a small youth, about my own age, wearing a brown uniform with brass buttons. His dark hair was brushed back from his forehead and he smelled strongly of Brylcreem. I approached him and said I was starting work there. He eyed me suspiciously. "At the 'Ungaria? What doing", he piped, his voice not having broken. I said I supposed I would be in the offices as I was to learn the business side of catering. "Second floor, then", he replied. I entered the lift, he closed the gates with a crash, took hold of the handle of a controller and we slowly rose to the second floor. "Go to the door marked 'Enquiries'", he said, pointing, "Spect I shall see you later." He crashed the gates together and the lift descended. I knocked at the Enquiries door which was opened by a large man with a black walrus moustache. He was wearing a brown suit, thick pebble-lensed glasses and had black hair in what would later come to be called a crew-cut. He had a piece of paper in his hand. "Bruce Gifford?", he enquired in a thick, foreign accent, I agreed that I was. "This way", he said, ushering me into the next office where there were three large desks, several dark green filing

cabinets and a large window through which could be seen a brick wall. Another large man also with a moustache and glasses but quite bald sat at one of the desks writing. A second desk was covered with papers and files. The first man led me to the vacant desk. "Please sit down", he directed. He went over to one of the filing cabinets and withdrew three foolscap books with stiff covers. "Have you a pencil?", he enquired, I took one from my breast pocket. He opened one of the books which was ruled in vertical columns. He told me it was a wine ledger and asked me to check each entry and pencil a tick if it was correct, a cross if it was wrong. Down the left hand column were the names of wines. The other columns showed the stock, price and value. I set to work. As I had begun to realise, even though the Maths Department at school hadn't, I was quick and accurate at Arithmetic and soon got the hang of it. There were frequent mistakes. The two large men worked in silence for a while then the one who had set me to work took out a cigar, lit it and began speaking to his colleague in a foreign language, a very foreign language indeed, I didn't recognise a word. The bald man answered him and their conversation continued on and off for the rest of the morning. They completely ignored me, nobody else came into the office. I continued mechanically checking the entries in the books, my mind occupied with happy memories of Rous Lench, Sea View Cottage the Railway, Gran's houses in Cleethorpes and school. A lump came in my throat. I thought of Kitty, Gran and Ken Francis. I wondered if I should ever see them again. I remembered Monica and how nice she had been. Once again I became homesick, London had become a hard, cold place, nothing like the exciting, welcoming city I remembered. The senior Hungarian, as I now thought of them, took out a pocket watch, looked at it and said that I could go to lunch.

I left the office, the lift was in darkness so I went down the stairs alongside it, out of the door into Regent Street. I had decided what I was going to do. I went to Lyons Corner House, had curry and rice for lunch, travelled back to Archway on the Underground and returned to the Youth Hostel. Once again the Warden opened the door. "What did I tell you!", he cried, "we're closed till four". I stammered out a story about telephoning my mother who had told me to return home immediately as there was a family crisis. He asked what sort of a crisis. I had the sense to say that it was a private matter, which was unanswerable; I had to catch the 4-15 train from King's Cross. "You'll have to pay for to-night", he grumbled, "get your things and come to the office". When I returned he gave me 12/6d and once again handed me the sweeping brush. "Before you go, just sweep out the Refectory", he said. And I did.

I arrived at Grimsby Docks station about eight that evening and walked into the Railway. I went upstairs into the living room where Kitty, Gran and Evelynne were sitting, listening to the radio. They looked at me in surprise. I started to tell them what had transpired and burst into tears. Gradually the story came out and they all comforted me, saying that I had done the best thing. It seemed incredible that I had only left them the previous morning. Kitty told me that I should have to stay at the Railway, which I was now happy to do. The Autumn Term started the following day so I went back to school for another year.

I have deliberately written the account of my first job without comment. It is, however, a sad reflection of the care and attention with which Kitty and Harry brought me up. To let a fifteen year old boy who had never been away from home on his own, go off to a job in London without at least ensuring that he had decent lodgings and adequate arrangements for day to day living was negligent, to say the least. Like most working class people of their generation they had little idea of what was involved in starting a career, almost a profession, and seemed content to let me find my own way. They had both left home, Harry in the Army, Kitty on war work, and had looked after themselves. I suppose they thought I should be able to do the same. The treatment I received at the Hungaria was probably typical of such organisations at that time; a junior like me was expected to find things out for himself, there was no formal induction or training program, the work I had been given was make-work to keep me occupied. The man who interviewed me was English, being charitable about it I suppose he was away and nobody else on the staff knew anything about me beyond the fact that I was due to start. I never heard anything from the Hungaria afterwards, they may have written to Kitty to find out what had become of me, if they did she never said anything about it. Perhaps the Hungarians, fearing trouble, had denied all knowledge of me and the manager decided I had just not turned up.

My return to school passed unnoticed except by Ken Francis and one or two more cronies who asked what had happened in London. I passed it off by saying the job had fallen through, which was true enough. Those of us entering the sixth form were told to report to one of the classrooms where we were told that we would be accepted provisionally until the School Certificate results were known when we should be confirmed, or not, as the case might be. We were told to choose three main subjects and a subsidiary—I chose English, History and French with German as a subsidiary. I then moved into VI Arts(1)

School life was much more enjoyable in the sixth form. We had a timetable to keep to and there were lessons and homework but we were treated more like students than pupils. Some of us were made prefects, needless to say I was not one of them. I worked quite hard in class and actually did some homework

The set book in English was "Vanity Fair", which I enjoyed; we also had to read "Everyman in His Humour" by Ben Jonson, which I thought was gibberish, and Marlowe's "Edward 11", which was much better. Somehow we managed to study this play for a whole term without the word "homosexual" being uttered or written once. I think we were all sophisticated enough to understand what was being implied without the subject ever being raised. I suppose to-day a teacher might deliberately use such a text to instigate a discussion on the subject of deviant sex. Teachers were sacked for much less in 1943.

I started German under the tuition of the school captain, Norman Dennison, as the only teacher of the subject was fully occupied. It went well for a week or so and then petered out altogether as our tutor had too many other commitments. This was a pity as he was a good teacher. He later took a PhD in Finnish and became professor of languages at one of the red-brick universities.

In late September the lower sixth form were called to a spare classroom to learn the School Certificate results, I shared a desk with Ken. The grades were read out in alphabetical order, so he learned his fate before I did. He had failed. I don't think either of us was surprised as he was completely non-academic; he was slightly consoled by the fact that his twin sister had failed as well. Not long after, my name came up. I had Distinctions in English and French Oral, Credits in French and History and Passes in Art and Geography. I had passed. Poor Ken patted me on the back and said "Good show". The only thing that surprised me was my pass in Art. I had never considered it one way or the other, it hadn't been included in the Mock exams and I never thought of it as one of my better subjects. During the war years we had no chance to learn the theory or history of Art or visit an Art Gallery. Grimsby didn't possess such a thing but both Hull and Lincoln had one. I regret this as I think I should have done well at them. At least I had got a Certificate, even though it was a bare minimum pass; I shouldn't have to revert to the fifth form, like Ken to go through the stupid business of taking the whole thing over again in December, neither should I be treated to any more views up Miss Waugh's skirt. It was a fair bargain.

I was now a full member of the lower sixth form. One of my classmates, in the upper sixth was my only contact with a future celebrity. His name was Pat Cheeseman, he was a keen member of the school amateur dramatic society and, after National Service in the Navy, went to RADA and became an actor, taking the name Patrick Wymark. In the sixties he became famous as the leading actor in a television serial called the "Plane Makers", playing a character called Sir John Wilder. It became very popular and was followed by a sequel called "The Power Game". He played other parts on TV, in films and on the stage until he died of a heart attack in the seventies.

After my traumatic experience in London Grimsby seemed a much better place, for a while, anyway. I quite enjoyed school, spent some time at Sea View Cottage, although I never lived there again, and followed my interests in trams and buses, reading, films and, increasingly, in popular music. The big American bands were the only ones considered worth listening to by the cognoscenti and I bought several records of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman etc. The American band of the Allied Expeditionary Force had been formed under Captain (later Major) Glenn Miller's direction. Effectively it was his civilian band under a different name. There was also a British band of the AEF, a sort of concert orchestra, something like the later Mantovani outfit, directed by Regimental Sergeant Major George Melachrino. Nobody under the age of 30 listened to it. It is interesting that the American band was led by an officer and the British band by an NCO, reflecting the British Establishment's view that popular music on the radio was strictly for the oiks, not requiring the competence of the British officer class. It was a great time for swing music and I have never really grown out of it.

I began to think about the future and what I wanted to do in life. After four years' indoctrination by the world's best propaganda machine I couldn't see beyond the armed forces, preferably the one having the most glamorous uniform so that girls would come beating at the door to get at me. If it had been possible, of course, I would have joined the U.S. Army Air Force, large numbers of whom were now stationed near the town and whose Lightnings, Thunderbolts and Mustangs were a familiar sight overhead. I wouldn't reach military age until October, 1945, two years away. Even though I was enjoying life in the sixth form I realised that I hadn't the application necessary to get to university, which would have involved taking School Certificate again to get more and better grades, followed by extremely hard work. One would have thought that a school like Wintringham would have had an extensive Careers Department. In fact our class teacher, Miss Jessie Bemrose, had the responsibility along with her other, more pressing duties. She produced a sheaf of leaflets one day, telling us that they described various careers and would be placed in the school library. I looked through them; all except one offered careers in the armed forces or the Civil Service, beautifully produced and well written. The odd one was a sheaf of typed sheets describing the terms and conditions for employees of Grimsby Corporation. I read them all, confirming my desire to get into uniform as quickly as possible. Considering my interest in trams and buses, I suppose I might have thought of a career in the Corporation Transport Department; fortunately I realised that there was a big difference between doing the interesting and pleasant parts of a subject for enjoyment and having to do the boring, tedious and difficult bits because you needed the money. In later years I took the same view about photography.

I tried to tell Kitty about this problem; I think that, at the back of her mind, she had visions of me as a subaltern in a crack regiment or First Lieutenant on a destroyer. It never seems to have occurred to her that the character she had played a large part in creating was unlikely to qualify me for such responsibility. She must have spoken to Harry about this because he told me that somebody he knew had a vacancy for someone to pack parcels and load them into a van; when I was old enough I might get to drive the van and unload it as well. Considering that he had friends and contacts who were solicitors, estate agents, auctioneers, fish merchants and garage proprietors and was himself well thought of at Hewitt's Brewery this was hardly the best he could do. I didn't fancy the parcels so that was that and he never mentioned the subject again. For lack of anything better I stayed at school, quite pleasant but a complete waste of time. Every so often Harry got me to help him with heaving cases of bottled beer and minerals about before school; he didn't pay me but gave me the odd carton of Lucky Strikes or Camels, which cost him £1 and, on one occasion, a maroon and green bomber jacket which hangs on the door of the back bedroom as I write.

It must have been about this time that the school took part in a National Savings drive to raise money for the war effort, everyone being exhorted to buy Savings Certificates to meet the school's target. I mentioned this at home. The next morning Harry called me into his office and gave me several wads of £1 notes. "There's about £1000 there, take it to school and buy Savings Certificates in my name. Look after it, for God's sake." I stuffed the notes into my schoolbag and, in due course, presented them to Miss Bemrose, who was running the campaign. She gasped, "How much is there?" I told her. She called one of my classmates over to help and the money was counted into bundles of £100. There were 10 with a few pounds over. Despite her evident surprise I wasn't the only one involved in money laundering, a term which hadn't then been invented; at least half a dozen others, all of whose fathers were in business, brought similar large sums, one nearly £2000. The school exceeded its target by a large amount, receiving a letter of congratulation from the Mayor, which was pinned on the noticeboard. The certificates later helped to pay your school fees at St. James's.

Towards the end of term the annual school Speech Day was held, at which prizes and certificates were presented. I was invited to attend to receive my School Certificate and duly reported to the Methodist Central Hall where the event took place. The whole school was seated in the auditorium with the exception of the prizewinners and certificate-scrappers like me, who waited in the wings. The staff and assorted dignitaries sat in a row on the stage. The Headmaster gave the usual address, reviewing the school's year, and invited some big pot or other to present the prizes. The first names

called were the elite who had won university scholarships and Higher School Certificates, received with polite applause, followed by the members of the Upper Sixth Form. The first two or three of these were received in the same way, then came a young man named Barry Horwell, a prefect who believed in doing the job properly. As he walked across the stage the auditorium erupted in an ear-splitting chorus of booing, catcalls and shouts of "Greaser", drowning any applause. It should have been stopped immediately by sending Harry Wheatley and Ernie Worrall, the Art master, who had an equally heavy hand, into the audience to clout a few heads at random and stay there to prevent a recurrence. Nothing was done. The next prizewinner, a young lady, also a prefect but easy-going, pretty and popular, was greeted with loud cheers and wolf-whistles, and so it continued. By the time my turn came the uproar had died down somewhat, I got a mixture of boos and cheers. Once the Sixth Form had been dealt with the barracking became less frequent and finally stopped altogether. The ceremonies staggered on and finally ended with the singing of the hymn "I Vow to Thee My Country". "Roll Me Over" would have been more appropriate and more heartily sung.

The following morning at Assembly Dr. Walter referred to the previous day's fiasco, saying that it had been a disgraceful display. And that was the end of the affair, nothing more was said, there were no punishments. This was probably the wisest way of dealing with the matter. The school was normally well disciplined and well behaved. The use of the cane was permitted but only by the headmaster and very infrequently as a last resort, less than once a year on average. We were a docile generation, brainwashed into believing that we had to keep in the background, doing as we were told, and let the grown-ups get on with winning the war. The Speech Day episode was an isolated incident, an outbreak of mob-rule, which had never happened before and nothing like it happened again during my time at the school.

My parents' marriage, by this time, was just about non-existent. They shared a bedroom, which didn't mean much as Harry spent most nights away. Kitty started going out in the afternoons with one of the barmaids who lived nearby. One day I had arranged to meet her on my way home from school to go to the Regal to see "Mutiny on the Bounty", which was on re-issue. She arrived shortly after me and was not her usual self. I realised something was wrong when she gave me a handful of change to buy the tickets. The film started and after a few minutes she asked loudly, "Isn't that Clark Gable?", shortly after which she fell asleep. I realised that she was drunk and left her alone. When the film ended she was awake and almost sober. As we walked home she explained that Aunt Did had told her that Peter Bradley had married an ATS (WRAC) girl, one of his colleagues, without telling anyone and she was very upset by the news.

Kitty and Harry had frequent rows, generally behind closed doors. One night, however, they had words at the top of the stairs leading down to the pub. This soon involved Gran, Evelynne and me. At some point Evelynne, who had a sharp tongue, made some remark that stung Harry who raised his arm as if to strike her. I threw myself at him, bearing him to the floor, my hands round his throat, at which point Gran once again saved me from the worst, this time by throwing the contents of the fire bucket over us both, converting potential tragedy into farce. We were both soaked. Harry tottered off, I changed into dry clothes and hurried off to Sea View Cottage to spend the night, telling them about the row but not the violence. I returned to the Railway the following morning and life continued as before.

Towards the end of 1943 Kitty decided that she, Gran, Evelynne and I would have to leave the Railway, this time for good. She had no savings but Evelynne had a few hundred pounds in the Halifax, which would be enough to buy a small house. Some time in January, 1944, they settled on a bungalow in a cul-de-sac off Yarborough Road-7, Fannystone Road. I have no idea why we ended up in that part of the town rather than Cleethorpes, I think the idea of a bungalow attracted them as both Gran and Evelynne found stairs difficult. We moved in February. Harry wouldn't let us take anything but Gran and Evelynne's furniture and insisted on keeping a lot of books he had bought at sales, which I had thought were mine, the parrot and the dog, Prince.

The bungalow was jerry-built, as we quickly found, one of the removal men putting his foot through a rotten floorboard, fortunately without hurting himself, and a pool of water on the kitchen hearth indicating that the back boiler was leaking. There was no immersion heater so for two or three weeks we had no hot water system. The weather was cold and dismal and I began to regret the move, at least the Railway was warm and there was hot ^{water} for a bath. I missed Prince and the parrot. Gradually things improved, the floorboards were replaced, a new back boiler was installed and we settled in. Money must have been a problem for Kitty, Evelynne's wages and Gran's pensions were our only income, although I think Harry sent her some money via Gran, who he always liked and respected. Somehow we managed; I am surprised that Kitty never suggested that I should leave school and get a job, which would have made good sense for all the good I was doing. I was still enjoying school without exerting myself. I had acquired a girl friend, or rather she had acquired me by letting it be known through an intermediary that a request for a date would be well received. Her name was Sheila Wharton, a slim, dark girl, quite pretty, living in Cromwell Road. She was good natured, quiet and had absolutely no intellectual interests. The only books she read were school books, she never read a paper, she enjoyed going to the movies but couldn't discuss the film afterwards. Her whole world was school and home so that was what we talked

about. It was a bit boring but it was a start, I had been out with girls on odd dates before but she was my first steady girl friend. The affair lasted for several weeks. It was completely innocent and never rose (descended?) beyond the level of holding hands in the movies and chastely kissing good night, perhaps that was the reason it came to an undramatic end in the early Spring.

The JTC loomed larger than usual at this time, the Cert "A" exams were held and I finally passed Part 2, being promoted to Lance Corporal, which didn't mean anything as it was automatic when one gained the full Cert "A". Shortly after the start of the new term a former pupil visited the school and fell into conversation with Ken and me. He was a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy and was wearing an impressive officer's uniform with a wavy band of gold braid round each cuff. He had completed his first voyage to America after doing six months training at the North Eastern School of Wireless Telegraphy at Otley, a small Yorkshire town on the River Wharfe about ten miles North of Leeds and Bradford. It had originally been situated at Bridlington on the Yorkshire coast but had been evacuated inland at the start of the war. We questioned him closely about the school and the training it provided and got the address so that we could write for a brochure and application forms. Neither Ken nor I had the slightest interest in radio, the great attraction was that beautiful uniform and the chance that we might sail to New York, first trip. I don't remember the cost but I think it was about £400 for the six months training necessary to take the Postmaster General's Special Certificate in Wireless Telegraphy, which would qualify us to become Third Radio Officers, a grade introduced during the war to provide replacements for the heavy losses caused by the U' boats. Harry agreed to pay the fees, another way of money-laundering which cost him nothing. The cost included boarding at the school.

It must have been a different story at the Francis household. Ken's father was the cashier at an old established firm of solicitors in the town, effectively a senior clerk. There was some money somewhere, they couldn't have afforded to live in a big house in Weelsby Road on his salary, but it must have taken a big slice out of whatever they had put by for Ken and Heather's education. We applied and were accepted, our training was to start in early August. Ken had failed School Certificate a second time at Christmas and was determined to pass at the third attempt, doggedly applying himself to his books. I remember us cycling to Croxby Pond, near Binbrook, at half term. We took sandwiches and I lay in the sun, smoking, while he studied "A Tale of Two Cities" in the same way as he might have studied a page of French irregular verbs, almost committing it to memory. I wished that it had been the set

book the previous year as I had read and enjoyed it twice. Poor old Ken, he was a good friend, probably the best I ever had. Despite his efforts he never did pass School Certificate and it hurt his pride very severely. I had to be careful to keep off the subject for fear of depressing him for days.

Somehow Ken and I, with a number of other youths at the school became involved with a group of girls from Cleethorpes Girls' High School. We used to meet in a Milk Bar in Pasture Street after school and soon paired off. I became friendly with Jean Enderby, fair haired, blue eyed, vivacious, highly intelligent, who lived in Tennyson Road, Cleethorpes. There was little romance about the affair we were good friends and enjoyed each other's company. I particularly remember taking her to the Ritz one evening to see "The Sullivans". The film was based on the true story of the five Sullivan brothers from small-town Middle West America. It dwelt on the happy family life and the whole-some good times they had growing up, the old swimming hole and Mom's apple pie featured strongly. Patriotism inspired them to join the Navy in a body shortly after Pearl Harbor. In due course they went to sea, all in the same destroyer at their own request. After several heroic actions the ship was sunk and the brothers were all drowned. The ending of the film was a masterpiece. It showed a sunset with glowing clouds, the soundtrack softly playing "Anchors Aweigh", then the four elder Sullivan brothers appeared walking towards the sunset, followed shortly after by the youngest brother, always late, calling "Hey, you guys, wait for me!" as "Anchors Aweigh" rose to a crescendo and "The End" came up. Every woman and girl in the cinema was in tears, even the usherettes were crying. You couldn't hear the soundtrack properly for the sobs. Jean wept on my shoulder as I led her gently out of the cinema to join the queue of weeping females waiting for the trolleybus home.

I enjoyed the Summer term, knowing it was my last. Ken played cricket for the school First XI and I was roped in as scorer, travelling about with the team. The best match was at Louth Grammar school which had a beautiful pitch, backed by the ancient red brick school buildings and surrounded by huge elm trees. It was a day of high summer and Wintringham won an exciting game, I've never had much interest in cricket since that time but when people talk about the joy of the game as played on village greens I know what they mean.

I was due to start at Otley in early August and decided to have a holiday first. I had been reading Hugh Walpole's "Herries" novels and decided to go to the Lake District for a few days in a Youth Hostel. My London experience hadn't put me off such places, which were excellent for their intended purpose which was to provide basic accommodation for young walkers or cyclists and not a permanent dwelling place for such as I had been. I had no difficulty in choosing when to take my trip, it offered itself—the week of the exams in mid-July.

Harry gave me some money and a carton of Chesterfields, Kitty gave me the train fare. I travelled to Manchester on the Sunday, arrived in early afternoon, booked into a hotel near the city centre and spent the rest of the day riding on the trams. Manchester, at that time, was a tram enthusiast's dream; it not only a large fleet of trams of its own but also those of Salford, Stockport and a system called Stalybridge, Hyde, Mossley and Dukinfield Tramways—old fashioned dark green cars which meandered through the outskirts. I bitterly regretted not having a camera or, more accurately, not being able to get film for the box camera I had inherited from Kitty. I regret it even more bitterly today with greater knowledge of the photographic trade. Film had vanished from the chemists' shops but must have been available somewhere—a copy of the "Amateur Photographer" would soon have set me right. I can't think why this never struck me at the time.

The Youth Hostel was at Crosthwaite, near the South end of Lake Windermere, the nearest station was at Kendal, about seven miles away. I queued for a bus (Fortunately it ran on Mondays) and was surprised to hear the Cockney accents of several women and children who were among the second wave of evacuees from London, which was being attacked by V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets. There were other reminders of the war as the area was being used for advanced infantry training. As the bus trundled along the winding road we passed several Bren gun carriers laden with troops. I never understood the purpose of this curious vehicle which was armour-plated, ran on tracks, like a tank, but had no superstructure or roof. The soldiers' heads and shoulders protruded above the armoured sides without any protection. I am sure it can never have been used in combat against the Germans as it wouldn't have lasted five minutes against hand-grenades or mortar fire. Somebody once told me that it had been designed for use against Indian tribesmen on the North West Frontier, who didn't have such sophisticated weapons. I doubt if it did any good there either.

The hostel was a large cottage called "Damson Dene", just outside the village. I walked from the bus stop and, without thinking, knocked at the door. It was opened by a young man in a sweater and slacks. "It's only half past three, we're not open till four, it's in the hand book", he said, and closed the door. It all came back to me as I sat by the roadside wondering what was in store. When I thought half an hour had passed I tried again. This time I was greeted by the same young man with a smile of welcome, a handshake and an apology for having to stick by the rules. I was shown to a comfortable dormitory and given a large supper.

It was a good holiday, spoiled only by the rain which fell constantly throughout the three days I was there. I made friends with a London University

student and two office-girls from Preston, plain but intelligent and lively. The Warden lent me his bike and I explored the area as well as I could in the pouring rain which has left me with a poor impression of the majestic scenery which I could barely see through the mist and rain. I have always meant to revisit the Lake District, hopefully in better weather. It would have been easy enough in later years when we lived on Teesside and had a car but we never actually got there. Mama and I set off one day in late spring and gave the journey up as a bad job at Appleby when it began to snow heavily.

I left Damson Dene on the Friday morning; my friends had left the previous day after exchanging names and addresses. I said good-bye to the Warden and set off after sweeping out the dormitory. There was no bus on a Friday so I had to walk the seven miles into Kendal. It was a beautiful day and very hot in the sun. I had spent all my money and had only my return ticket, a few packs of Chesterfields and a packet of sandwiches from the Hostel to see me home. By the time I got to Kendal station I was hot, tired and hungry. I ate the sandwiches while waiting for the train and hoped I should be home by teatime. I was wrong. There were two main line stations in Manchester and I had to walk from one to the other, not having any money for tram fares. By the time I reached the Central station for Sheffield and Grimsby the train had gone; I should have to wait for the night train (known as the paper train) which got to Grimsby about four in the morning. One of the porters suggested that I take a train which was about to leave for Sheffield by a roundabout route. He thought there might be a local train from Sheffield to Grimsby. I did as he suggested and travelled to Sheffield through places I had never heard of in Derbyshire, arriving in mid-evening. There was, of course, no local train, I had to wait for the paper train which was due in the small hours. I might as well have stayed in Manchester. I went to the waiting room, which was crowded, and managed to find a seat. I was very hungry, not having eaten since mid-morning, and wondered how I was going to last out until I got home -

Seated near me was an elderly couple, the woman was searching through a large shopping bag. "Eeh! that bloody bag of sugar's burst all over 't sandwiches", she said to her husband. "Never mind", he replied, "that pork's last Sunday's, I wouldn't fancy eating them now. Gis 'em 'ere, I'll chuck 'em in t'bin." His wife gave him a thick packet of sandwiches wrapped in newspaper. Before he could throw them away, I caught his arm. "Don't you want those sandwiches?", I asked. "Nay, lad", he replied, "Tha can't eat them, the pork's gone off and they're covered in sugar," "Never mind", I cried and snatched the package from him. I then wolfed down four thick sandwiches of dubious fat roast pork with a thick layer of sugar. They were delicious and I suffered no ill-effects.

I went to school as usual on Monday for my last week. None of the staff referred to my unauthorised absence or the fact that I had deliberately avoided the exams: I actually did some work. The Wednesday was taken up by a JTC field exercise in the countryside near North Thorpe. Ken and I hired a tandem for the day and arrived back at Highfield half an hour before the rest, risking our lives to do so. I remember that we passed several cars along Scarthoe Road. We had become school characters, Gifford and Francis, always good for a laugh, capable of all sorts of eccentric behaviour. We had even become involved in the Dramatic Society's production of "Much Ado", largely because Ken fancied one of the girls, known for some reason as "Singapore". The play was put on at a hall in Old Clee and, after the last performance we all marched arm in arm along Weelsby Road to Highfield. Before long an empty coach stopped and the driver gave us a lift the rest of the way. Ken made an opportunity to sit with Singapore by standing by an empty seat, shouting "Fares please" like an idiot until the lady appeared, when he carefully nudged her into the seat, dropping himself into the seat beside her. I found myself sitting beside a colourless, shy fifth form girl, put my arm round her, to be sociable, and was surprised by her passionate response. The ride only lasted a few minutes, the driver dropped us at Park Avenue and she vanished. Pat Cheeseman collected a few shillings from us, tipped the driver and we all ended up serenading the caretaker and his wife, who lived at Highfield House, with a selection of music hall songs. Ken took Singapore home, fruitlessly.

On the last day of term we were given our reports. I was amazed at mine, every teacher had gone out of their way to find something praiseworthy or complimentary to say. I would never have guessed that it was me they were writing about. I wish I had kept it. There was a final assembly, we sang "Lord Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing" and I left Wintringham for the second time, this time for good. I turned out of the school gate with Ken, lit a cigarette and walked off down Eleanor Street without feeling the slightest regret.

Wintringham had once been a good school and became one again, it was my misfortune to have spent the most important years of my school career during the war which had reduced its efficiency. The Headmaster, Dr. Walter, a decent, cultured man, didn't have the force of character which might have overcome the many problems caused by lack of qualified staff and the fiasco of the first months of the war. Many of his staff were competent, dedicated teachers who did their best in difficult circumstances, but a number were defeated time-servers, content to get by without too much trouble. The school produced adequate exam results by concentrating on the obvious exam-passers to the detriment of the odds and sods like me. I have suffered for it ever since.

During the last weeks of my school career the British and Americans had finally invaded Europe, landing on the coast of Normandy on D Day, June 6th. Up to that point the Allied military effort in the West had been devoted to defeating the Germans and Italians in North Africa, capturing Sicily and invading Italy. Meanwhile the real war was taking place in Russia and the Ukraine. The Red Army had stopped the Germans before Moscow and had pushed them back during the winter of 1942. The Germans had attacked again until they were defeated at Stalingrad in November, 1942, the Russians surrounding and capturing most of the German 6th Army. From then on the Russians slowly moved forward, being increasingly supplied by the American and British arms factories. Titanic battles were fought in Western Russia, the Ukraine and the Baltic countries throughout 1943-44. In Western Europe the great bombing campaign against Germany was at its height. The RAF bombed the Germans at night, the USAAF during the day. There were two bomber fields near ~~by~~, both RAF, at Waltham and Binbrook. Almost every night the sound of the Lancaster and Halifax four-engined bombers was a constant background noise, going out during the evening and returning during the small hours of the morning. There were no American bomber fields near Grimsby but, changing trains at Peterborough one day, I heard the sound of a large number of aircraft engines and, looking up, saw a fleet of several hundred Flying Fortress bombers approaching at about 10,000 feet. Soon the sky was filled with these magnificent planes, in immaculate formation, the sun glinting on their fuselages, the sound of their engines now deafening as they flew steadily eastwards towards Germany. It was the most impressive sight I had ever seen, a unique display of the mighty power of the United States.

There has been a lot of controversy in recent years over the value of the strategic bombing of Germany but there is no doubt that it was very popular with the ordinary people of this country. The feeling was simply that the Germans had started it by bombing us and now they were getting it back with interest—serve the bastards right. Various people in high places are said to have protested privately to Winston Churchill about the inhumane bombing of German residential areas in industrial towns, against the Geneva Convention. If they had made their protests in public they would have been in danger of being lynched by angry mobs of people whose relatives and friends had been killed or whose houses had been destroyed in German air raids. People made no distinction between the Nazis and the great mass of decent, non-political Germans, British propaganda had carefully lumped them all together, men, women and children. The only good German was a dead German.

Ken and I spent the next six months at Otley, living at the school which was at Ashfield House, a large manor house in its own grounds with several outbuildings. It had been allowed to run down but was as comfortable as such places usually are. One of our fellow students who had been to boarding school said it was better than Repton in most respects, the food was about the same, the dormitories were better, the standard of teaching worse. We were given a maths test on the first morning and I surprised myself by coming third out of twenty five, annoying Ken who came much further down the list and had passed in Maths in his second attempt at School Cert. Most of the time was spent receiving and sending Morse code, working our way towards the required speeds. We spent very little time on the theory of wireless and the practical aspects the various sets and pieces of equipment we would have to deal with. To this day I have only the sketchiest idea of radio theory but I can still receive Morse at a reasonable speed. We were allowed out in the evenings, after a study period known as "Swot". Public houses were strictly out of bounds, reasonably enough, a rule which didn't bother Ken and me as he was determined to stick to his Baptist principles and I had been put off pubs for life by living in them as a child. There wasn't a lot to do in Otley, a small mill-town with a population of about 5000, didn't offer much in the way of entertainment, there were two cinemas and a YMCA forces canteen which we were allowed to use by virtue of our tenuous relationship with the Merchant Navy. We all wore an imitation "MN" badge in our buttonholes. It looked quite official and gained admission to forces clubs and canteens which were numerous at the time. The main attraction of the place was the River Wharfe which split the town in two, there being only one bridge, and was very pleasant in the Summer with a riverside park and towpath. There was also a hill on the outskirts known as the Chevin, which provided dramatic views of the surrounding area after a stiff walk up its steep pathways. It was a favourite for courting couples, with many secluded places in its copses and shrubberies. I never sampled them; the nearest I got was accompanying a fellow student and his attractive cousin all the way to the top, at which point we tossed up and I lost. As it turned out I didn't miss anything.

Our school fellows were the sort of cross-section of the population I was later to meet in the Army. Most of them were older than Ken and me, having saved up to pay their fees out of their wages, the rest were grammar or public school boys like us. We all got on very well and I can't remember any fights or serious quarrelling. We were allowed to dress pretty well as we pleased, mostly in sports jackets and slacks, uniform was optional, most, like Ken and me, couldn't wait for our uniforms to be ready. I wore my maroon and

green jacket with the word "Grimsby", cut from the shoulder-titles of my JTC uniform, sewn on each shoulder by Aunt Evelynne. It gave me a nickname by which I was known throughout my time at the school. We were popular with the girls of the town and I enjoyed several much more successful experiences than the trip up the Chevin. They were progressively less innocent than the hand-holding and chaste kisses of Grimsby and Cleethorpes but never went all the way. Some aspects of these encounters puzzled me and, years later, I discussed them with Dorothy, who had spent several months in a Yorkshire mining village, having been evacuated during the war. She said that there were several rules "good" girls were taught by their older friends. If you were fond of a boy and you had been out with him at least once before it was all right to let him put his tongue in your mouth when he kissed you but wrong for you to do it first. He was allowed to put his hand inside your blouse as long as it stayed outside your brassiere and under your skirt as long as it stopped at the elastic of your knickers. Sensible girls wore their school gym knickers which were considered to be almost impregnable as well as off-putting, they were known as "passion killers". This answered most of my questions, I wished I had known of these rules at the time, to which she replied that the strictest rule of all was that under no circumstances were they to be divulged to boys or they would just do what they liked without feeling they were being granted privileges by respectable girls.

We went home every other weekend, leaving Otley as early as possible on Friday afternoon, taking the bus to Leeds and, if there was time before the train, having lunch in the YWCA canteen in Cookridge Street, near the bus stop, a two course meal for a few coppers, eaten under false pretences thanks to our uniforms which we collected from a Leeds outfitters after four weeks. They were tailored in a material called doeskin with a gold braid lightning flash on each cuff. The cap badge, which I still have, was carefully designed to look as near as possible to a Merchant Navy officer's badge without actually being one. The outfit was completed by a magnificent greatcoat with stiffened epaulettes, also displaying the gold lightning flash. I wish I had a photograph of myself in this uniform; nobody seems to have thought of it, however. I sometimes wonder if I looked as impressive in it as I thought I did.

I was still on friendly terms with Jean Enderby and met her on each of my visits home until the end of October when I had decided to give a party for my seventeenth birthday. Apart from Jean and Ken I had invited several of our cronies, including particularly a friend of Jean's, a very pretty, dark-haired girl called Moira, who Ken fancied strongly. He arrived early, resplendent in his uniform, followed shortly by Jean. Time passed, nobody else appeared. In the end the three of us ate as much as we could of the sandwiches, cakes and cream trifle (her speciality) that Kitty had provided and Ken and I saw

Jean home. I met her again at least once after that because I remember her telling me that she wasn't speaking to Moira because her excuse for not turning up was too feeble to believe. I never learned why the others didn't arrive. Years later one of them became a colleague at BTP, by which time the "party" was too far in the past so I didn't ask him.

By the time we went home for the Christmas holidays we had completed our training and were to take the exams early in the new year. During the night before Christmas Eve the air raid warning sounded during the small hours. A noise like several motor bikes with defective silencers could be heard and, going outside, we saw glowing red lights crossing the sky to the north of the town from east to west. They were V1 flying bombs—the first rudimentary cruise missiles—released from German aircraft over the North Sea and intended for the Manchester area. Not one of them got there, all fell and exploded harmlessly on the Yorkshire Moors.

Kitty, Gran and Evelynne were now settled at 7 Fannystone Road. It was comfortable and cosy and seemed more of a home than any of the pubs had been. I went to see Harry at the Railway; he gave me some pocket money and was interested in my account of life at Otley. I didn't see his lady friend, no doubt kept out of the way for my visit, or any of the barmaids I remembered. This was disappointing as I had hoped that Lily might still be there now that I was old enough to ask her for a date.

One episode has stayed in my mind about that holiday. A friend from school called Mike Willcox was working in the Pathology Lab at Grimsby General Hospital and invited me to visit him there one evening after hours for a guided tour. He showed me the lab he spent most of his time in and then opened the door of a room in darkness, telling me to stay there while he switched the light on. When he did so I saw, a few feet in front of me, a slab on which was laid the naked corpse of an elderly man with the top of his head sawn off, lying on the slab beside him. Mike stood beside me, grinning. "Are you all right?", he asked, I didn't know what he expected me to do, faint, scream, cry, vomit or run away. In fact I didn't feel anything at all, it might as well have been a side of beef lying there. My fear of death seemed to have gone, although it was always more of a fear of the flowers, hearses, coffins, grave-stones—the panoply of death for the benefit of the living. Mike was disappointed at my stoicism and tried to put the fear of God into me by showing me various jars with interesting bits and pieces of the human anatomy and describing various post-mortems he had taken part in. I looked and listened with great interest until he gave it up as a bad job. He got me an invitation to the Hospital Christmas party, which I attended in uniform. For some reason I pretended to be Canadian, putting on a convincing Transatlantic accent. There

was an awkward moment when I couldn't remember^{WHETHER} Prince Edward Island was on the East or West coast but I managed to bluff my way out of it and enjoyed a lively evening, ending up by making a date with a pretty, blonde nurse, several years older than me named June. In those days nurses' leisure time was very restricted and she only had the afternoon off so we went to Cleethorpes for a walk along the Promenade. It was a fine, cold December day and we got on well; she reminded me of Monica, even down to her soft voice with its Devon accent. We made another date to go to the pictures on her next evening off and I had high hopes of a rewarding evening. I was disappointed, however, as Mike unwittingly let it drop that I was no more Canadian than he was. This interesting news was soon retailed to June who let it be known that I needn't bother about any further dates with her. Perhaps I should have pretended to faint when Mike showed me the corpse.

We returned to Otley for our last week, the exam being on the Thursday. On the Wednesday afternoon we were called to a meeting of all students at which the Principal announced that, because of the reduction in sea traffic across the Atlantic, now that the U-boat campaign had been defeated and the war in Europe was nearing its end, the Special Certificate had been discontinued and the rank of Third Radio Officer abolished. He recommended that we stay for an additional six months and take the Second Radio Officer's exam in June. Because of the unusual circumstances special terms would be available. Somebody asked whether we should get any of our money back, the answer being that the school had done everything it had contracted to do—we had been trained up to the standard required for the Special Certificate. There had never been any promise of a job, the circumstances were completely unforeseen. There would be no rebates.

This was devastating news for us all but particularly for those who had spent their life savings to better themselves and had no more money. The problem for Ken and me was not money, Harry could easily afford further fees so could Alan Francis if he had to, so much as the fact that we were both certain that we should have failed the exam, not on the telegraphy side but on the practical, technical operation and maintenance of the large complicated radio sets, designed in the thirties, with their mysterious valves and curiously named components (whatever was the grid leak?), which still remained a mystery to us both. I went with Ken to phone his parents from a call box and tell them the news. The answer was simply "Come home", they offered to see that Kitty got the message.

We left Otley the following day, someone offered me £15 for my greatcoat which I accepted. We said goodbye to our fellow-students, most of whom were doing the same as us, took the bus into Leeds and had our last lunch in the YMCA. Ken's father invited Kitty and me to their house to discuss the matter.

His legal colleagues had gone through the brochure and other papers and advised him that the school authorities were within their rights—they had fulfilled their part of the contract. The question of inadequate technical training which Ken and I raised was a possible ground for complaint but nothing could be proved since we hadn't taken the exam.

The worst aspect of the Otley episode for me was simply that it had been a complete waste of five valuable months; far more so than my last year at Wintringham where I had managed to learn something despite my lack of enthusiasm for work. There was no question of our returning to Otley for further training, neither of us wanted to or thought we should ever pass a more advanced exam; we had both lost whatever interest we had managed to scrape up in radio and had given up any idea of a career at sea. Ken decided to follow his first inclination and go into the police force. I hadn't the faintest idea what I wanted to do and, worse, what I was capable of doing. The best advice came from Uncle Bert when I told him I was thinking of joining up. "Never volunteer", he told me, "let them call you up. You'll be 18 in October, they'll come for you fast enough then and if you like it you can sign on and if you don't you'll know you'll be out before very long. If you volunteer and sign on you're stuck for seven years." Kitty agreed with this as did Harry when I went to the Railway to tell him the news. He asked a few questions about Otley and let the matter drop, asking me what I intended to do. I told him what Bert had said and that I was going to the Youth Employment Office to get a job to tide me over until I was called up.

I went straight to the Office which was nearby in Cleethorpe Road and registered for work. The only vacancy they offered me, an ex Grammar School boy with a School Certificate, was as a labourer in a biscuit factory at Great Coates belonging to a firm called Watmoughs, later to become Scribbans-Kemp and United Biscuits. During the war there was an Order in force called "Direction of Labour". So far as I can remember the rule was that if the Labour Exchange or Youth Employment Office offered you a job you were capable of doing you had to take it: I had no option.

I reported to Watmough's at 7-30 the following Monday morning, wearing a brand-new boiler suit Kitty had bought me and was set to work loading biscuit dough onto a conveyor belt leading to the ovens. The dough was prepared in large tubs on wheels, about 4 feet in diameter and 3 feet deep and was transferred to the belt by digging it out of the tub with a garden spade. Simple enough, but there was a catch; you couldn't use your foot on the blade, the whole effort came from your back and shoulders. By the end of the day I was exhausted and aching. The front of my boiler suit was covered in grease from the dough and it was all I could do to ride my bike home. I spent the

evening asleep in my chair and tottered off to bed at nine o'clock. Somehow I managed to drag myself out of bed in the morning, dress in my boiler suit, which Kitty had somehow managed to clean, and set off for work. For the rest of the week I did odd jobs about the factory with the other labourers, only spending the odd hour or so digging dough. Every^{one} hated this job, the worst in the factory, and avoided it whenever possible. Cream Crackers were the worst because the dough stank of ammonia and you couldn't eat it; some of the sweet biscuit dough was quite palatable. On the Friday I drew my pay (about £2-10s) and asked for my cards. I had had enough. This job gave me a strong aversion to hard, manual labour which has lasted all my life.

Everybody sympathised with me. Kitty said that it was disgraceful, Harry said he would see what he could do. I told him I wanted to learn to drive and he offered to pay for lessons. I had taken out a provisional licence soon after my 17th birthday, the driving test had been suspended at the start of the war and the provisional licence entitled you to drive the moment you signed it. One of the garages in town, Grimsby Motors, had a dual control Austin Seven and I took six lessons at 5/- a time, at which point the instructor said I was ready to take the test if there had been one. I never had any difficulty with the lessons, driving was much simpler in those days—what little traffic there was moved slowly, in town anyway, and the Austin Seven, for all its faults, was an easy car to drive. I told the Employment Office that I had learnt to drive and they sent me to a firm of builders merchants in Garth Lane where there was a vacancy for a van driver. This was foolhardy; I had learned the basics of driving, I had a fair idea of the theory of the internal combustion engine and the mechanics of suspension, steering and transmission, I even had a loose grasp of the electrics, having read the "Motor Manual" and the "Autocar Handbook", I had read the "Highway Code". I had no idea of the minor skills of driving—starting a cold engine, checking oil, water, battery and tyres, all of them much more vulnerable than they are now. I reported to the builders merchant's office and the foreman took me into the yard where there was a Jowett 5 cwt. van. He got into the passenger seat, I nervously took the wheel. "Right!, off we go", he said, "head for Corporation Road". I started the engine which was fortunately warm, depressed the clutch, put the gearlever into first, revved up and let out the clutch. The engine stalled. I repeated the performance and it stalled again. The foreman tapped the knob of the gear lever. "You're trying to start it in top", he said, "this gear change is the wrong way round—right to left". This wasn't uncommon in pre-war cars but I had never heard of it. It finished me. Somehow I managed to get the van moving and turned into Garth Lane where we stalled. The foreman got out and opened the driver's door. He took my introduction card from the Employment

Office, wrote "Unsuitable" on it and gave it to me. "Take a few more driving lessons, son" he said, took my place in the driving seat and drove off. I walked to Victoria Street and volunteered for the Army.

The recruiting sergeant was pleased to see me, it was a quiet day. I told him I wanted to join the Tank Corps, he shook his head. "Sorry, we're not taking volunteers for the armoured regiments at the moment." I thought for a moment, "all right, what about the Intelligence Corps?" he shook his head again. "What can I join?" I asked. "Tell me what you've been doing, what education have you had?" he said and lit a cigarette, offering me one which I accepted; he gave me a light. I told him my history, leaving out Watmough's and the builders' merchants. "School Certificate and Cert 'A'?", he exclaimed, "you ought to go in for an infantry commission, you stand a very good chance". It sounded convincing, he ought to know. He produced a form which we filled in together. I signed it. I had joined the Lincolns for seven years with the colours and five years on the reserve.

If I had known that the recruiting sergeant was paid a commission for regular recruits I might have acted differently. He got nothing for "D of E", (Duration of Emergency) volunteers who only served the same length of time as they would have done as conscripts. When I named the Tank Corps and Intelligence he should have told me that I could volunteer for D of E and take my chances at the Primary Training Centre, where I should be able to state a preference for one or the other. I was lucky not to have been a few inches taller as he would have recruited me for the Guards. He got double commission for that.

I left the Recruiting Office feeling that a weight had been removed from my mind. The weeks since I left Otley had been passed in a state of depression. The only jobs I had been offered had amounted to nothing, the only bright spot had been the driving lessons even though my attempt to get a driving job had been a farce. I had applied for various vacancies I had seen in the "Telegraph" without being called to a single interview. With only six months or so until I was called up the only jobs I was likely to get were rubbish jobs like the one at Watmough's. At least now I had an end in view.

The first person I gave the news to was Gran, the only one in when I got home. "You'll be all right", she said, "the war's nearly over now, by the time you've finished training it'll all be over." I told Kitty when she arrived home. She had been working for several months with Aunt Did in a clothing factory in Hamilton Street after spending three or four weeks as a trainee manageress in the NAAFI at Kirmington Airfield, to which she had been directed by the Labour Exchange. She hated every minute of it and got out as soon as Aunt Did managed to get her a job. She was pleased when I told her what I had done, still being under the delusion that I would eventually become an officer in a crack regiment. The only one to take the news badly was Harry,

,particularly when I told him I had volunteered for the LIncolns."Whatever made you join the Infantry?",he exclaimed,"a lot of my pals did that in 1914, most of them got killed on the Somme.Cannon fodder,that's all they were.Why didn't you join the Tanks or the Service Corps?".I told him what had taken place at the Recruiting Office and that I hadn't been given a choice;I had been told I stood a good chance of a commission in the Infantry.He took five one-pound notes from his pocket."Take these and don't waste them",he said,"you can't get a job now,you can have some more when you need it."

I gave Kitty three of the pound notes,knowing it would burn a hole in my pocket until I spent it.I had volunteered in mid March,the next three months passed quickly and pleasantly.I missed Ken,who was now a cadet in the Birmingham City Police,and spent a lot of time reading.I finally worked my way through Arnold Bennett,followed by Galsworthy's "Forsyte Saga" and the less well known works of H.G.Wells.By this time I had read all of J.B.. Priestley's novels and most of his plays.He is completely unfashionable now but his thirties and forties novels will become classics in the future.I had started on American literature,Sinclair Lewis,John Steinbeck and Theodore Dreiser particularly,which increased and modified my knowledge of the country.Jack's family returned to their house in Weelsby Road and he came home for three weeks in April for the Easter holidays from Rossal.We spent most of the three weeks together,going to the movies,strolling about and playing snooker in one or other of the many billiard halls then open in the town.I had lost touch with Jean and whatever dates I had with girls during this time have left no impression.

I was called to attend a medical examination at Lincoln in early April, passing it in grade A1,and reported back to the Recruiting Office on 14th April to be enlisted,swearing allegiance to King George VI,his heirs and successors and being given a day's pay (3/-) for my trouble.I was in the Army.

The war in Europe ended officially on 8th May,VE Day.There were great celebrations in London mainly involving the huge number of service men and women in the area,most of the men being American or Canadian.To the ordinary people in Grimsby and the rest of the country it came as an anti-climax,people were sick of the war and bored with waiting for it to end.There was no feeling of elation as there had been at the end of WW1.Once the Normandy campaign had been won and the Americans broke out from the beach head to take Paris it seemed that the war would be over in a few weeks,particularly after the Americans and French invaded the South of France on August 15th,1944.Churchill opposed this operation as he felt the troops involved would have been better used in an invasion of the Balkans,which he considered were the "soft under-

-belly of the Axis. He had said the same of Italy, which had been invaded by the British 8th and American 5th Armies in September 1943. He was, of course, wrong. The invasion of the French Mediterranean coast was highly successful, liberating a large part of France with relatively few losses. The Italian campaign was a different story, the Germans fought tenaciously all the way up the peninsula to almost the very end of the war, with heavy losses on both sides. It was difficult for the British public to understand why it took us so long to defeat an enemy, in headlong retreat from the Russians and facing the Western Allies who had overwhelming air and military superiority. It would have puzzled them even more if they had known that for the greater part of the war we had detailed knowledge of German plans through the Enigma transcripts of German communications.

On the afternoon of VE Day I went into town to see if there was any excitement. In Town Hall Square a crowd was gathering in front of the Town Hall, where a piano was being man-handled onto the balcony. Somebody said there was to be community singing. After a few minutes a group in the crowd started to sing "Tipperary" and, gradually, the rest of us joined in. At that point a burly figure appeared on the balcony, that of Albert Hewson, a local singer, in great demand at Masonic functions and the like. He raised his arms and blew into a microphone that had been rigged up, to assure himself it was live. "Quiet please!", he bawled, "this is a solemn occasion. We are gathered here to give thanks to Almighty God for granting us victory in the terrible war which has just ended, not to sing music hall rubbish. Those who want to can sing that sort of thing to-night when they're all drunk. We'll start by singing 'Oh, God Our Help In Ages Past'". A pianist played the introduction and he began to sing. Whenever I hear the word "pompous" this fat, bespectacled man turgidly singing his dreary hymn comes into my mind. A few serious-minded souls joined in. Most of the crowd, who had come for a sing-song and a few laughs began to melt away. I went to the pictures.

I think there were a few hastily-organised street parties here and there but I never saw any of them. Ken was given a few days leave and came home from Birmingham the following day. He took me to see his Uncle Leslie, who was in business in a small way and had a lock-up garage full of all kinds of merchandise, among which was a box of fireworks left over from before the war. I bought the lot for £1-10/- (not such a bargain as it seems, most of them retailed for less than 2p) and that evening we had a firework display in the back garden of 7, Fannystone Road, intently watched by a large number of neighbours, a lot of them children who had never seen fireworks before.

Somebody had told me that most infantry officer candidates were sent to a training battalion at Inverness and I had been hoping to be sent there for a particular reason. One of Aunt Evelynne's friends had a daughter who was in the WRNS, stationed at Inverness. I had met this young lady, who was very pretty, and when her mother wrote, telling her that Miss Scrimshaw's nephew expected to be sent there and asking her to look after this lonely recruit, she wrote back, saying that she remembered meeting Bruce and would be pleased to meet him in Inverness and show him round. There was a shortage of eligible young men in the town. There was a large number of WRNS and the training battalion was the only male unit of any size within miles: the soldiers seemed to prefer the local girls. My thoughts turned in a certain direction. The WRNS only recruited girls from good (ie middle class) homes, who were well educated, well spoken and had good manners. They didn't usually consort with other ranks and were popularly supposed at school to be issued with silk underwear for the benefit of naval officers. The ~~chance~~ of having an invitation to meet one of these delightful creatures was too good to miss. I looked forward to Inverness.

My papers arrived in late May, telling me to report on 7th June to the 29th Training Battalion at North Frith Barracks, Blackdown, near Aldershot. Not Inverness. I might have guessed it was too good to be true and I never did meet the beautiful Wren concerned. There were, in fact, two other training battalions I could have joined—the 27th at Derby or the 28th at Belfast. The time passed very quickly, On my last day at home I called in at school and was greeted enthusiastically by several of my former schoolmates who insisted on my sitting in with them at a debate which had been arranged to discuss the coming General Election, chaired by a lady teacher, new to the school, who was known to be a true blue Tory. They remembered my reputation as a former Communist and told me to let rip. I was at a disadvantage as I had lost interest in politics, being too wrapped up in my own affairs, and had no idea of the parties' manifestos. My recent reading of H.G. Wells, however, had given me a clear version of what a Socialist Government ought to do and what a Conservative Government probably would do. The teacher had given me permission to take part and invited me to speak on behalf of the Labour Party which, thanks to H.G. Wells, I did, making^{up} the party's policy as I went along. Somebody spoke for the Conservatives, making the mistake of devoting his speech to an appeal for gratitude to our great war leader, Winston Churchill, now the leader of the party, ~~and the leader of the party~~ who would carry on the traditions of the British Empire. A vote was taken by a show of hands and Labour won convincingly. I made a point later of reading the Labour manifesto and found that I had got it almost right. I had called for the abolition of the public schools which, in the event, Labour quietly left alone. Taking

leave of my friends,I was told that I should see most of the boys in the mornong as they were travelling to Louth on the same train as I was to a JTC field day.

I went to see Harry who gave me some money and a beautiful new Gillette razor,which he said I was going to need as they were hot ~~on~~ shaving in the Army.We shook hands and he told me to look after myself,the Army was all right but I should meet some nasty people,most of them officers and NCO's. In the end it all came down to looking after number one.In the morning I kissed Kitty,Gran and Evelynne good bye and set off for Town station where I met my former comrades of the JTC.I was received like some kind of hero, after all I was going to the real army while they would all go home as usual that evening.They lined up on the platform at Louth and cheered me off as the train drew out.

I travelled to King's Cross,had lunch at the Corner House and crossed to Waterloo where I caught a train to Brookwood,the station on my travel warrant.A number of young men,like me carrying suitcases,also left the train. Outside the station an Army truck was waiting on the forecourt,a corporal standing by it shouted "29th Training Battalion this way!".We clambered in- to the back and were driven the four miles to Blackdown.We were taken to a wooden hut where I filled in a form similar to the one I had completed at the Recruiting Office.These were collected and,one by one,our names were called out and we were handed small,brown booklets,open at the first page.When we had all got them a sergeant addressed us."The book you have been given is your paybook,officially known as AB64.It is extremely important,take very good care of it.WithOut it you cease to exist as far as the Army's concerned and all sorts of trouble will follow.For one thing you won't get paid and for another you'll be on a charge.At the top of the first page you'll see a number.It is your Army number.Learn it now.To the Army it is your identity, more important than your name.Once you've learned it you will never forget it".He was right.My number was 14465843,if asked I am sure I shall be able to repeat it with my dying breath.

We were formed up in three ranks outside and marched to the main stores Considering we had only been in the Army half an hour we didn't make a bad fist of it as nearly all of us had been in the Army Cadet Force or,a small minority,in the JTC.At the stores we passed down a long counter where various items of clothing and equipment were thrust at us,the last being a canvas kitbag into which I stuffed as much of the gear as I could,carrying the rest bundled up under my arm.The sergeant called names from a list.The first twenty or so were formed up and marched away,the occasional item of kit falling silently to the ground."Right!",shouted the sergeant,"that's "A" Company done with,you lot are going to "F" Company and God help you." There were only five of us so he didn't bother to march us the short distance to a group of wooden huts where a tall sergeant in the Worcesters was waiting.The two

NCO's conversed in low voices, then the Worcesters sergeant turned to us and said "Right!, I'm Sergeant Thorpe and this is your barrack room, No1 Platoon, F Company". He led us into one of the huts where a number of recruits were busily sorting out their new kit supervised by two corporals, one in the Royal Ulster Rifles the other in the South Staffs. We were shown vacant bed spaces and told to change into uniform and sort our kit into order so the NCO's could check that it was complete. I took one of the two suits of battle dress, a shirt, socks and a pair of boots and began to change. I was pulling up my uniform trousers when the South Staffs corporal said "You've forgotten something", holding up a white garment. I stepped out of my trousers and, for the first time in my life, pulled on a pair of underpants. I don't think I was unusual, very few boys in the working and lower middle classes wore them; later on, when we had got to know each other I learned that almost everybody else in the platoon had shared the experience. Needless to say, I have worn them the rest of my life. Underwear manufacturers owe a lot to the British Army.

So started my Army service, a classic traumatic experience which had an adverse effect on my character. It was completely unsuccessful and I never rose above the lowest rank I could hold. I shall always regret this and envy anyone who has made a successful career in the armed forces. I had enough sense to keep out of serious trouble, although on one or two occasions it was a close run thing, but was continually in minor scrapes owing to my inability to curb my tongue, particularly in the presence of my superiors.

For the first few weeks life was a misery until, gradually, things fell into place and I learned to cope with the seemingly endless cleaning, drilling and strenuous physical activity. The first days were occupied with tests of all kinds, followed by an interview with a personnel selection officer. He surveyed my results and asked me what I wanted to do in the Army. If I had spoken the truth I should have said that I didn't want to do anything at all in the Army, I just wanted to go home. I had the sense to say that I wanted to get a commission, which was the right answer. "Good!", he said approvingly, "I'm putting you down as an officer candidate."

Apart from the physical exertion two things stood out as particularly irksome. The main one was bullshit, in the Army sense of the word. Not only the essential cleaning, polishing and tidying of one's personal kit and living quarters but the burden imposed by the first requirement of military training at that time—to reduce each individual to a cypher carrying out stupid and unnecessary tasks without question simply because his superiors have ordered him to do so. In the end, I suppose, this attitude has to be in-

stilled into recruits, you can't run an army where the soldiers argue with their officers and NCO's and refuse to carry out orders which seem to them stupid. There must have been better ways of doing it though. A fine example of bullshit was the bedspace layout. We didn't have mattresses but things called "biscuits", three to a bed. Each morning these were piled neatly at the head of the bed and the four blankets, folded in a prescribed way, laid on top of them. Wall lockers had to be left open to display spare shirt, PT vest and shorts and sweater, all folded in a prescribed way and laid out according to a diagram, alongside toilet kit. This doesn't sound too unreasonable but there was a catch: everything had to be squared off and the only way of doing this to the NCOs' satisfaction was to slip strips of plywood or cardboard in each item of bedding or clothing. Properly done (mine never was) it looked magnificent and was utterly useless.

My other big bugbear, among many small ones, was shaving. I had not needed to shave more than once a week before joining up and didn't see why I should alter my ways. One morning during the first week Sergeant Thorpe carried out his inspection of the platoon, peering closely at our faces. When he had finished he shouted "All those who shaved this morning fall out and wait in the barrack room. Smoke if you've got any." About half the platoon did a smart right turn and marched off. The rest of us waited apprehensively. The sergeant counted us and then ran into the barrack room from where we heard him shouting. Two of the "shavers" emerged and fell in. Thorpe addressed us. "In the Army you shave every day whether you want to or not, whether you need to or not, it's an order. When I fall you out you're all to go to the ablutions and get shaved and you will do the same thing every morning for the rest of your service. Is that clear?", "Yes, Sergeant", we chorused. "One more thing", he continued, "you may not believe it but we understand how difficult these first weeks are for you all and we make allowances. One thing I won't have, though, is lying." He looked towards the two "shavers". "You two said you had shaved and you hadn't, you tried to get out of it. I was going to give everybody here a quarter of an hour on the bucket, I shan't now, you two can do two hours each instead. Fall out!". "The bucket" was the supremely useless task of polishing a battered, filthy galvanised iron bucket, imposed for minor infractions of discipline. By the time we left Blackdown its every surface might have been chromium plated. I started shaving daily and began to think I had got the hang of it when I ran out of Gillette blades, which were unobtainable. I had some anonymous blades which had come with the Naafi ration of cigarettes and chocolate. When I tried to insert one into my razor it wouldn't fit. I pressed it against the pins and screwed the top hard down on to it; there were slight clicks as the metal cracked. The blade was in place in a sense

but was not quite straight. I managed to shave somehow, feeling the occasional sting. There were no mirrors in the ablutions but one of my friends had one which he held up. "For God's sake, look at yourself", he said. I looked like the victim of a razor gang. This miserable business lasted each morning until I managed to scrape up the few coppers to buy a Wardonia razor at the nearest Woolworths, which would take the blades in the NAAFI ration.

The platoon was typical of the wartime army. We were all volunteers but most had volunteered for D of E only, only a handful were regulars like me, signed up for seven years with the colours and five on the reserve. We were a cross section of society, rather like the students at Otley. I made several friends in the platoon, the two I remember best are Tom Gill and Wally Blackwell, both of whom ended up in the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry. Tom came from West Bromwich. He was the first real Brummy I ever met and during our first conversation he told me about his recent attendance at the funeral of a close relative who had died in tragic circumstances. I listened incredulously to his broad Black Country accent and after a while began to giggle. He glared at me, having just reached the most harrowing part of his story. "What yo laugh-in' at?", he asked, "what's foony?". I managed to straighten my face. "All right", I replied, "you've had your joke, now speak properly." "Oi am speakin' properly, yo prat, oi day know ow to speak any other way." I soon got used to his accent but every now and then he would come out with some piece of dialect which wasn't really English at all. I particularly remember, when looking in a shop window, he said "Them am noice, 'ow mooch am them?".

Wally Blackwell was a very different character. He came from Oxford and had the local modified West Country/South Midlands accent. He and I went out into Aldershot and Woking, the nearest towns of any size, in search of girls. We might as well not have bothered. The whole area for miles around Aldershot was one huge military encampment, including a large number of Canadians who got whatever spare talent was going. Infantry recruits like us stood no chance at all; apart from anything else we had no money. After several fruitless sorties we had just about given it up as a bad job when somebody said that Staines was a good place for girls as there were very few troops stationed there and, particularly, no Canadians. It was several miles away, towards London; we had to get a bus into Woking and another bus from there to Staines. One Saturday afternoon we finally got there. We soon found that there might not have been many troops in the town, there didn't seem to be many girls either. We went into an ABC teashop for something to eat and were served by a very pretty girl. I chatted her up and made a date to meet her outside the teashop when they closed at six the following evening. Shortly after returning to the main street we picked up two girls, a small, pretty blonde and a tall, plain

brunette. Wally quickly attached himself to the pretty blonde, leaving her friend to me. I didn't mind her lack of glamour on the principle of any port in a storm. She was well-dressed and nicely made up and listened in a flattering way to my conversation, asking interested questions about me and my past life. We walked along by the river and sat on a seat. I was allowed to put my arm round the brunette but no more, Wally was equally frustrated. They were respectable girls. We had to leave them quite early to catch the bus back to Blackdown and arranged to meet them the following afternoon at four, which we did. I can't remember where we got the money from for all the expenses of these trips, Harry must have sent me one of his occasional postal orders. We went to a cinema on the main street, not far from the ABC tearoom. The girls had taken a lot of trouble with their appearance. Wally's girl looked lovely, mine was almost attractive, having made the most of what little she had. We settled in our seats and before long Wally and his girl were in a passionate embrace. The dark girl was more cautious, allowing me to put my arm round her as she had the previous day and kiss her on the cheek but firmly removing my hand from her blouse. At last she allowed me to kiss her on the lips. It was very pleasant. As the kiss progressed I opened my eyes and saw the illuminated clock; it was five to six. I had to make a quick decision—to stay with the plain girl, who wasn't really so bad and was good company in a situation that was beginning to look promising, or rush off to meet the pretty waitress. I made an excuse and left my seat. Instead of going to the Gents' I left the cinema and ran to the ABC tearoom, arriving exactly at six. The place was closed but she wasn't there. By seven, she still not having turned up, I slowly walked back to the cinema to wait for Wally and the two girls and to concoct an excuse for my absence. They emerged before very long and I lamely trotted out some cock and bull story that wouldn't have fooled a backward four year old. My erstwhile partner didn't believe a word of it and made her feelings very plain while Wally and the blonde said an affectionate farewell. I never went to Staines again but Wally did very well out of it. The blonde girl came to meet him a day or two later in Woking and eventually invited him home to tea at her home in a place called East Bedfont, where her parents made him very welcome. He enjoyed their hospitality for the rest of his time at Blackdown. I learned two useful lessons from this episode—that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush and that plain girls are nowhere near as easy as young men think, being well aware of their lack of glamour and that men consider them easy and are more careful of their virtue as a consequence.

Lack of money was a big problem, particularly if you smoked. I got £1.05p

per week, of which $7\frac{1}{2}$ p was deducted to pay for "barrack room damages", and I allotted $17\frac{1}{2}$ p to Kitty, leaving 80p per week in my hand. The NAAFI ration (40 cigarettes, a bar of chocolate and a razor blade) cost $12\frac{1}{2}$ p leaving $67\frac{1}{2}$ p to buy another 100 cigarettes and anything else I fancied. Since the cigarettes cost about 58p I was left with $9\frac{1}{2}$ p, barely enough to pay for the odd cup of tea in the NAAFI. We found a cheap source of cigarettes—the Canadians in a nearby camp who were sent ample free supplies by their home-town newspapers. At that time Canadian cigarettes came in packs of 25 which were sold for 10p, saving me 18p per week. We soon got used to Sweet Caporals, British Consols and Winchesters but there were still occasions when money and cigarettes ran out and the hardened smokers devised a military solution to the problem. We would dress in fatigues and spread out round the barracks, picking up all the dog ends we found. There were plenty of them and, since filter tips were virtually unheard of, they were a plentiful source of tobacco. Nobody ever queried what we were doing, assuming we were on some kind of punishment. Tom Gill had a cigarette machine which we kept supplied with papers; it quickly converted the pile of tobacco gleaned from the dog ends into a large number of cigarettes. Some of the more fastidious in the platoon wouldn't touch them. I always enjoyed them, as did the other nicotine addicts, who sometimes included NCO's and, on one occasion, an officer.

We passed out of our eight weeks primary training in early August and started Corps Training, wearing a red strip on each shoulder to show we were infantrymen. Our training underwent a step-change. We went on 15 mile route marches, we started night operations, we fired our rifles and Bren guns on the full size ranges at Henley Park and Stony Castle. Sergeant Thorpe was demobbed and we got a new platoon sergeant—Jim Florence of the Highland Light Infantry. He was a very different character from Thorpe, who was a typical old time regular. He was in his late twenties and came from the Gorbals district of Glasgow. He claimed to have been a bookmaker in civilian life and was a keen footballer, playing in goal for the battalion. He was as strict as Thorpe had been on parade but, being nearer our age, was more inclined to fraternize with the platoon off duty. He enjoyed discussions about films and football and was fond of organising general knowledge quizzes. I, or the team I was on, won them all. At length he stopped me entering and made me set the questions instead. This, together with my being in the top class for Education (two periods per week) earned me the rôle of platoon intellectual. Considering my very modest educational achievements this was a false position and rested on my wide reading, particularly of such magazines as Picture Post, Life and Lilliput, although possession of School Certificate in an infant-

ry platoon was equivalent to having a PhD in civilian life.

The 1945 General Election was won by Labour in a landslide, which came as a surprise to most people. The Conservatives (like my opponent in the school debate) had relied on the country's gratitude to their great war leader, Winston Churchill, and little else. They never understood that the ordinary people blamed them for getting us into the mess in the first place and almost losing the war by their lack of preparedness. There was also a feeling that, towards the end of the war, the Americans had taken over and we had become their poor relations. A lot of people also realised that the German Army had really been defeated by the Russians, the Allied invasion of France being little more than a sideshow.

The war finally came to an end on August 15th, VJ Day. Our training had been intended to prepare us for the coming battles in the Far East and the invasion of Japan. When we were told of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, which had destroyed most of the city and killed large numbers of Japanese civilians, we laughed and cheered. Nobody fancied fighting our way through the Malayan jungle or taking part in the landings on the Japanese coast. The Japs had fought like demons to defend tiny coral islands in the Pacific, God knew what they would do to defend their homeland. We were given two days off in honour of the final victory. Most of us stayed in barracks but a few bold spirits managed to get lifts to London and returned with lurid tales of the wild celebrations there, most prominent being the large numbers of American troops who had more reason to celebrate than we had, although we didn't realise it at the time. The American Far East Command had decided that the invasion of Japan was to be a purely American operation, possibly assisted by units of the Royal Navy and RAF. The Americans had three years' experience of landings against the Japs in the Pacific and had lost their high opinion of the British Army during its poor performance in the Normandy campaign and the slow advance through Northern France, Belgium and Holland.

We carried on training as before but it had lost its edge: the urgency had gone. We were not going to fight a war after all but to be part of an army of occupation in Germany, Austria, Italy and, presumably, Japan. In early September a long-awaited day arrived—we were going on leave for twelve days. Everybody in the platoon excepting the NCO's was awake at four, washed, shaved, dressed and ready to go at five. The barrack room and ablutions were immaculate. When the bugler blew reveille at six we gave him three cheers.

If it is possible to be in a state of euphoria for twelve days then I was euphoric for the whole of my first leave from the Army. Everything went right. Jack was home from school, Ken on leave from the RAF, the weather was fine, Harry gave me some money and I slept between sheets in pyjamas again. I had never been away from home for so long before. The longest pass you could have from Blackdown was 24 hours, not long enough to get home to Grimsby and

back again even if I could have afforded it. I realised how I had missed Kitty, Gran and Evelynne and just being at home. Towards the end of my leave, Jack having gone back to school, Pam Bradley invited me to a party organised by the Rangers, a sort of senior Girl Guides. It was very pleasant and I met one of Pam's comrades—my cousin Audrey. We exchanged pleasantries and I never saw her again. In the course of the games and dancing I attached myself to a pretty, dark girl, a fourth former at Wintringham called Mary. The attraction was mutual and I took her to the Ritz the following evening, my last one at home. It was very successful and we arranged to write to each other.

I travelled back to London with Ken, who was going back to his RAF camp, and returned to Blackdown in a state of depression. I had enjoyed a wonderful leave and had to leave my pretty, affectionate girl friend shortly after meeting her. The thought of another three months of Corps training was almost too much to bear. We had been back a few days when the officer candidates were called to a meeting. There were three of us in the platoon—Ron Haley, Dai Rees and me. There were about thirty of us in the education centre, where the meeting was held. We were told that we had been selected to attend the War Office Selection Board (WOSB, pronounced "wosby") at Witley, near Godalming, in Surrey, the following week. We should be there for four days, during which we would be treated as officer cadets. At the end of that time we should return to our platoons to await the decision of the selection board, probably about a week later. We were to wear our best battledress, collar and tie, belt, boots and gaiters, taking a set of denims, plimsolls, civilian shoes and toilet kit. There was no need to take any other equipment except our large packs to carry our gear. Somebody asked what we should do if we hadn't a tie or civilian shoes, which weren't on issue. The Adjutant replied that he would be spending some time in an Officers' Mess, there was nothing to stop him clumping about in his boots with the collar of his battledress blouse fastened if he wanted to. The Adjutant didn't think it would do much for his chances of a commission, however.

The WOSB was one of the Army's better ideas, one which is still in use today, not only in the armed forces but also in industry, commerce and the Civil Service. The idea is to put potential officers or managers into stressful situations to assess their ability to both give and take orders, their approach to problem solving and their possession of the all-important qualities of leadership. This includes not only practical tasks as an individual and as part of a group but also discussion groups and role playing, under the scrutiny of a psychologist. No. 5 WOSB was situated in a large manor house in extensive wooded grounds, watered by a fast-flowing stream, in the rolling countryside of the North Downs. It was a beautiful place, spoiled only by a row

of Nissen huts, which were the only sign that it was a military establishment. We were met at the nearby station in the late morning by a Warrant Officer who addressed us as "Gentlemen" and told us that for the next four days we were classed as officer cadets and would be expected to behave accordingly. We should address him as "Sergeant Major", rather than "Sir" but should treat the officers with the usual respect. He led us down a winding lane for about half a mile to the WOSB. I was deeply impressed by the lovely building in its magnificent setting. Once again I regretted not having a camera. We were allocated to the Nissen huts and told to make our beds, the Officer Cadet bit only went so far but at least there were sheets.

We were formed into "syndicates" or groups of six or seven and given numbered yellow armbands which we were told to wear at all times. From that point on our every action was observed; discussion groups, situations, tasks, meals, behaviour in the mess, all were scrutinised. It was very interesting and enjoyable, particularly the meals, served by ATS girls, eaten with silver service cutlery on white linen tablecloths. The first morning my syndicate was collected by a captain in the Seaforth Highlanders, wearing a kilt. He introduced himself and led us to a copse on the bank of the stream; on the way there was a stile, as he climbed it he demonstrated clearly that, in the Seaforths at any rate, Scottish officers don't wear anything under the kilt. He pointed to a large 45 gallon oil drum, a length of rope and a thick pole, about 12 feet long. He appointed one of our number, thankfully not me, to lead the syndicate in this exercise and said "You have to get the drum and the syndicate across the stream, using the rope and the pole in any way you wish. If any member of the syndicate or the drum touches the water, game's over. Get on with it!": he leaned against a tree and lit a cigarette. Confusion then ensued with several of the members trying to demonstrate their superior leadership qualities until, inevitably, someone fell in the stream, ending the exercise. The day continued until each of us had taken a turn at leading the syndicate in an equally futile exercise in another part of the grounds. I can't remember anything about my own performance, perhaps mercifully, except that it was as unsuccessful as almost everybody else's. It didn't strike me at the time that most of the exercises were virtually impossible, their success or failure being irrelevant. The object was to give the captain useful insights into our approach, leadership and qualities of initiative.

The following day was devoted to discussion groups and role playing, I felt I had acquitted myself well, much better than the exercises. After dinner Ron, Dai and I went for a walk down the lane past the WOSB and eventually arrived at a country inn. We had a few shillings between us and went into the public bar. To our surprise they sold rough cyder from a barrel for about 4d a pint, much cheaper than beer. We had three pints each, which slid down very easily. On the way back to the WOSB every remark anyone made seemed ex-

quisitely funny, we were almost helpless with laughter. We must have been drunk but I don't remember any other symptoms. We managed to calm down by the time we reached the Nissen huts and I fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow. I slept like a log, being awakened at Reveille by the Orderly Sergeant. I felt cold and clammy, the sheets and mattress were damp, my underpants were soaking. For the first time since infancy I had wet the bed. I looked under it—there was a small pool of liquid. I almost panicked but decided that the best thing to do was to say nothing and carry on as usual, accepting the discomfort and hoping for the best. I slid a newspaper under the bed to soak up the pool of urine, leaving a damp patch, which I hoped would soon dry. None of the others seemed to notice anything amiss and the day passed normally. By the time I went to bed that night the sheets were still damp but the damp patch had gone. I slept well.

A few days after our return to Blackdown the officer candidates were called to a further meeting to be told our fate. Ron, Dai and I were all NY6—equivalent to a failure but allowing us to try again in six months time. It was what I had expected and the only possible outcome. I would never have made an officer, being too diffident and immature to take such responsibility. I was a good talker and that was about it. I gave up any idea of a commission and never applied again. I sometimes wonder if the damp patch beneath my bed had been noticed and taken into account after all.

Shortly after resuming training I was put on a charge, not for the first time but easily the most serious. I was not alone, there were several others including Wally Blackwell and Tom Gill. We were on an exercise which involved a route march of about ten miles and then being split into half sections to map read our way to a place called Caesar's Camp near Broadmoor. Wally, Tom and I were in one half-section with two others, John Rowles and somebody whose name I can't remember. Rowles suffered from bad feet, perpetually covered in blisters. The ten mile route march was torture for him and by the time we started the map-reading exercise he could hardly walk. We split his equipment between us but it made little difference. We stopped and sat behind a hedgerow to decide what to do. It was a fine day and quite pleasant sitting in the sun. About half an hour passed and we had just about decided to carry Rowles as far as we could on a makeshift stretcher, made from a battledress jacket and two rifles when we heard a motor bike approaching down the road. It stopped and a head appeared over the hedge. It was the Company Commander, Captain Jack Hardisty of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, commonly known in the Army as the dirty 33rd. We stood up, two supporting Rowles. I saluted. He put us all on a charge of falling out on a route march, giving us five days' CB the following day.

"CB", of course, means "confined to barracks", but there was a lot more to it than that. Every spare minute was taken up by parades or fatigues, starting with an inspection, in full battle order, at Reveille outside the Guardroom by the Orderly Sergeant. Defaulters were not to be visible in the vicinity of the Guardroom before the bugler sounded the call but had to be lined up, properly to attention, when he finished. To accomplish this we had to crouch behind a nearby low wall, the only cover, jumping over it as the bugler began to blow and running blindly across a main road to line up on the pavement in front of the Guardroom. Fortunately there was little traffic at that time of the morning but it wouldn't have made any difference if there had been. After the inspection we ran back to the barrack room to change into denims to carry out whatever job the Regimental Police could find for us. The first and most important was to collect their tea from the cookhouse. I have never understood why they did this, they must have known what would happen, it was too good an opportunity to miss. The tea was in a large metal container with a handle, holding two or three gallons. The way back to the Guardroom passed through a narrow passageway between the blind ends of two huts, giving ample chance to spit in the Regimental Policemen's tea. Some hard cases were said to have pissed in it as well but I never did. The tea was always accepted and drunk without complaint, perhaps the RP's liked the flavour.

There was another parade in the early evening followed by more fatigues, this time devoted to scrubbing the Guardroom floor on hands and knees. It must have been the cleanest stretch of parquet flooring in the South of England, it would have put most butcher's blocks to shame. The last day was a Saturday; they gave us the task of shovelling the ten tons of coal in the battalion bunker from one side to the other, to occupy the afternoon, followed by the usual scrubbing in the evening. When we were finally dismissed we were not only shattered but ravenously hungry. We were not allowed in the NAAFI and were too late for "supper," a meal consisting of the left overs from the day's menu, including cold porridge, cold mashed potato and cabbage and stale bread with cheese rinds, all eaten with relish. We dragged ourselves back to the barrack room where several of our comrades were returning from the evening's amusements. One or two cheered and witty remarks were passed about shovelling coal and scrubbing floors. I lost my temper and raved at them, calling them all the rotten bastards I could lay my tongue to. I was running a risk as several of them could have laid me out with no trouble, but, for whatever reason, my diatribe had its effect and they sheepishly left us alone. It wasn't the last charge I was on but it was the last involving any severe punishment.

Training intensified, we went on schemes, assault courses, blitz courses

with live ammunition, longer route marches, we learned to throw hand grenades, fire two inch mortars, Tommy guns, Sten guns and the PIAT, an anti-tank weapon. This device was operated by two men, one to aim and fire, the other to lean against his back to absorb the recoil. I was with Wally Blackwell, as usual, and fired the weapon successfully, hitting the wreck of a tank used as a target. The rudimentary sight was a strip of metal with three holes drilled in a vertical line. The top hole gave the maximum range. Wally chose the bottom one. We set ourselves and he took aim and fired. I heard a loud bang and felt a blast of warm air. I stood up and turned round, the rest of the platoon had thrown themselves to the ground. The projectile had struck a grassy hummock about twelve feet in front of us and exploded. Wally's face was blackened but he was unhurt. He giggled, "I must have chosen the wrong hole", he said, "not like me!".

About this time I went on a 24 hour pass to London with a friend called Joe Wilson from Boston. We went to the Stage Door Canteen, famous as a place where Show Business personalities showed their gratitude to Allied servicemen by serving them meals and providing free entertainment. Most of those present were Canadians or Americans, we could see why when we paid for the meal. The entertainment was perfunctory and the glamorous ladies who served us weren't going to put themselves out for a couple of squaddies, after all, the war was over. I managed to solve a problem that had been worrying me, however; the cutlery was much better than the knife and spoon (I had lost the fork) that I had at Blackdown so I carefully dropped a set into the map pocket of my trousers as we left.

We went on leave again at the end of November. It was nothing like that wonderful first leave, Jack and Ken were both away, the weather was bad. I had kept up a correspondence with Mary and met her the first evening I was home. She had arranged to baby-sit for a relative and took me with her. It seemed like a good idea until I learned that she had also invited one of her school friends, a tall, plain girl who lived nearby. I stayed for an hour or so, trying to take part in their conversation, and finally left. I never learned why she had chosen to treat me in such a way, her letters had become less frequent but were still regular. I let it go, it didn't really matter. I wasn't glad to return to Blackdown but at least I had friends there.

The last three weeks of Corps training included a form of torture called a ten mile bash. We were used to covering five miles as a platoon in battle order in one hour but the ten mile version was in a different league altogether. The idea was to be able to cover ten miles in two hours, ending up fresh enough to go straight into action if need be. To prove it the bash ended at the 30 yard range where we had to fire five rounds at targets. It amazes

me now to think that I actually did this but if we had been on active service there would have been no possibility of going straight into action, we should have just have had enough energy to surrender to the first German we saw.

Shortly after this I caught a cold, went sick and was sent to the Casualty Reception Station at Mytchett, a sort of field hospital, with suspected bronchitis. I was there for a week and returned to Blackdown after everyone had gone, the passing out parade had taken place two days earlier. I spent the next few days doing fatigues, waiting to be posted. I had been put down for an infantry signals course at Catterick but had missed it. We were sent on a few days leave over Christmas and I went to see Harry who gave me a Yorkshire Bank passbook, in my name, with almost £100 in it. "This is yours", he said, "do what you like with it". I almost ran to the bank and presented the book at the counter. The cashier took it, referred to a file, and came back to me carrying a large card. "I'm sorry", he said, "the account has less than £1 in it, do you want to close it?, £98 was drawn out by Mrs. K. Gifford, one of the signatories, in January 1944, it was never entered in the book". I went back to Harry and told him what had happened. He laughed, "Good old Kitty, only has what her poor hands get her. You'd better give her the book now it's up to date". He gave me £10, a lot of money then and as much as I needed. I never said anything to Kitty, there didn't seem to be any point, I would have gladly let her have the money anyway.

I went back to Blackdown for a couple of days and was then posted to the 7th Infantry Training Centre at New Barracks, Lincoln. It was a very different place from Blackdown, being a conventional heavy infantry depot devoted to training conscripts, later to be called National Servicemen. Three regiments were based there—the Lincolns, Foresters (Notts and Derby) and Yorks & Lancs (Sheffield). There was very little bullshit, the emphasis was on physical fitness. It made me realise just what high standards were achieved at Blackdown and how much better trained we were than the conscripts who had done all their service at Lincoln. I renewed acquaintance with Joe Wilson and made friends with a former Sheffield University student called John Kerr. New Barracks was a miserable place, built at the top of Lincoln's cliff, open to every icy wind that blew. It had some advantages, however, it wasn't far from the city centre and there was a good bus service; you could have a 36 hour pass almost for the asking, which meant I could get home on a Saturday afternoon and stay until Sunday evening.

Kitty had asked me to visit her former landlady in Lincoln, Mrs. Wells, who was very old, to see how she was. I did as she asked and drank a cup of tea with the old lady who was full of questions about Kitty, Harry, Gran and Evelynne. She lived alone, her husband having died not long before and her daugh-

ter Amy having moved from Lincoln to live in the country. Her granddaughter, Betty, aged 12, sometimes stayed with her and arrived while I was there. She was very pretty and I wished she were a bit older. As I was about to leave Mrs. Wells asked where I was going next, I said I was going to the pictures. "Why don't you take Betty?", she said, "she'd love to go, wouldn't you me duck?". I could hardly refuse and, anyway, she was very attractive and tall for her age. We caught the bus into the city centre and joined the queue at one of the cinemas. She was intelligent and vivacious and we kept up a lively conversation. In those days most cinemas had a number of double seats at the back; the usherette showed us into one and I was surprised at Betty's precocious behaviour. She smoked one of my cigarettes and then drew my arm round her waist, snuggling against me. We saw little of the film after that as, like the other couples around us, we started kissing, passionately. She was easily the sexiest girl I had encountered up to that time. I had to keep reminding myself that she was only twelve, particularly when she put my hand onto her small, firm breast and then established whether I was aroused, which I was: extremely. We caught the bus back to Carr Street, where she led the way in the early evening darkness to the back gate. We continued where we had left off in the cinema and, recklessly, I explored further. When my hand finally rested on her school knickers she giggled, "Disappointed?, I'll wear my silkies next time. Come on, it's time to go in. Nan'll wonder where we are." Mrs. Wells had prepared supper, which I enjoyed, continuing my conversation with Betty. When I left she saw me to the door. I asked when I could see her again and she explained that she only came to Lincoln for occasional weekends as she lived with her mother, brother and sister in the country. She told me to write to her at Carr Street and she would write back. She wanted to see me again and said she would manage it somehow. We kissed goodnight and I returned to New Barracks.

I wrote a circumspect, carefully worded letter a few days later, knowing it would be some time before I received a reply. I had enough sense to realise that I was treading on dangerous ground by starting such a relationship with a twelve year old girl. Admittedly, I was only just 18 and she was not far off 13, but in the eyes of the law I was an adult, she was still a child; if matters went much further than they had at Mrs. Wells's back gate I ran the risk of serious trouble, even prison. The fact that she was more experienced than I was and had made all the running didn't matter: she was below the age of consent.

The dreary routines of infantry training continued. I was heartily sick of it and racked my brains trying to think of a way out. John saw a notice in the Orderly Room inviting volunteers for a Royal Artillery training course in Gunnery Control. Successful completion of the course would mean transfer to the Royal Artillery and automatic promotion to sergeant, the only qualif-

ication was School Certificate with a credit in Maths. I explained that I had failed Maths altogether and so didn't qualify. He suggested that I risk it; they never asked to see certificates and, as long as I was careful in my replies to questions I should easily get away with it. He was probably right but I knew that, with my luck, I should be the one to be caught out. I could just picture the scenario—passing the course, transferred to the RA, promoted to sergeant and then busted to private, kicked out of the RA and sent back to the Lincolns in disgrace. He decided to go ahead but I waited for something else to turn up, which it very soon did. We were given a lecture on the work of the Military Police, volunteers were called for and I applied. I hadn't the slightest interest in police work but it was a way out of the Infantry. If they had wanted volunteers to become Kamikaze pilots I would have gone in for that.

For a few days we soldiered on. One day has stayed in my memory. We were divided into half sections, given a 1" map of the area and a list of map references and told to report to each one in strict order. NCO's would be there to check us in and to ensure that we completed the course, a wide arc around the North of Lincoln. It was a bitterly cold January day, there was ice on the puddles. Everyone, even the NCO's, wore scarves and gloves, some in bright civvy colours. One or two also wore Balaclava helmets, mine was navy blue. At Blackdown the whole lot of us would have been put on a charge for being improperly dressed. Each half section had a different route to follow and we marched off, losing any semblance of military bearing once we were out of sight of the barracks. In fact it was, by Lincoln standards, an easy day out, no more than ten or eleven miles. We had been given sandwiches for lunch which were all eaten during the morning. We passed through about half the checkpoints and found ourselves in the village of Dunholme at lunchtime. We were all hungry and nobody had much money. We went into a grocer's shop to buy a loaf of bread, which was all we could afford. As we waited at the counter a motherly, middle aged woman approached us and asked what we were getting. When we told her she said "Never mind that, just follow me". She led us out of the shop, across the square into the playground of the village school. She opened the door of one of the buildings and let us into a large room in which were several tables bearing the remains of the children's dinners. She sat us down at a cleared table, one of the girls brought us knives, forks and spoons and then we were each served with an extra large school dinner. I can't remember what the main dish was, except that it was delicious, but the pudding was suet jam roll and custard. We cleared everything in front of us and went to thank the motherly lady, one of the children had told us that she was the headmistress. She waved our thanks aside. "I'm sure your mothers would do the same for my son. We owe you a lot more than a school dinner." The children were

lined up to wave us good bye, we formed up and marched smartly out of the village. In all the time I was in the Army it was the only disinterested, kindly action done to me just because I was a soldier.

My application to join the Military Police was accepted; along with several others I was to report to the Military Police depot at Gatton Park, near Redhill, in Surrey, in mid-February for a twelve week training course. At the end of January I was sent on leave for ten days. I only remember one thing about it. Aunt Evelynne was still working at the Brighowgate Homes and had got Kitty a job there as night attendant. They got me an invitation to the annual concert cum social evening. I quite enjoyed myself and I fell in with Aunt Evelynne's sewing-room assistant, an attractive blonde girl, called June Samuels. We finished the evening snogging in the darkened dining hall. I was pleased to learn that she was sixteen.

I returned to Lincoln for the few days before moving to Gatton Park. On my last Saturday I was put on duty as Billet Orderly. The only duty involved was to stay in the barrack room until 1600 hrs., preventing me from getting a pass home. I decided to call on Mrs. Wells in the hope of seeing Betty or, at least finding out how to get in touch with her. The house was in darkness and there was no reply to my knocking. After a minute or so the door of the next house opened and an elderly man looked out and asked who I was looking for. When I told him he replied that Mrs. Wells had gone to live with her daughter somewhere near Grantham. The house was up for sale. I turned away and caught the bus into Lincoln. It was probably for the best; God knows what would have happened if I had met Betty again, particularly if she had been wearing her silkies.

The Military Police course was like a holiday camp compared with Blackdown or Lincoln. Gatton was an interesting place which had been a rotten borough in the old days. The only remnant of whatever village had been there was a small, well-preserved, 12th century church, the main feature was the large modern mansion which had belonged to Sir Josiah Colman, the mustard millionaire. It reminded me of WOSB, having a scattering of Nissen huts, in which most of us were billeted. We were to spend four weeks there, four weeks a mile down the road at Merstham to do motor cycle training and the last four weeks back at Gatton Park. I quite enjoyed my time there, I made some friends and one or two enemies, went out with several girls and started drinking in pubs. Redhill was a thriving, prosperous place and there were no other troops in the area. Gatton Park was about a mile outside the town and was served by London Country buses. The camp was spartan, there was no NAAFI canteen or any other facility so most of us spent our free time in the town. On Sunday morning there was a church parade to the little church. It wasn't compulsory, you could

do fatigues instead, but we were free to leave camp once the service was over. The vicar must have been the happiest clergyman in Surrey. He had a full church every Sunday morning, one of the sergeants played the organ, two others were sidesmen and the choir was composed mainly of Welshmen.

The training was easy going, we learnt elements of military law, police procedure and rudimentary unarmed combat. The PT Instructor who took this subject told us that if we were going to hit somebody, always to hit him with something unless we were trained boxers, which we weren't. The best thing to do was to give him a good kick in the crotch; no man could stand it. If we couldn't get our boot in, the knee was next best. Of course we had to expect him to do the same to us and he demonstrated various ways of protecting ourselves. I am happy to say that I never had to make use of this advice. The motor cycle training camp at Merstham was a smaller version of Gatton Park, being a large country house surrounded by huts and garages, but nowhere near as impressive. We learned on BSA 500cc bikes and rode all over Surrey, including a rough riding area near Caterham where we learned to ride in and out of bomb craters. I never took to motor bikes and never felt confident riding them, I passed the course but only once rode one, a few weeks after finishing the course, and have never been on one since. Weapons training was sketchy, the Military Police at that time were armed with .38 revolvers, Webleys or Smith & Wessons and we did two or three sessions on the range with them without much success. I couldn't guarantee to hit a life-size target much more than six feet away.

My best friend there was Ron Street, a former Commando in the Queens. His home was at Carshalton, not far from Gatton on the southern edge of London. He invited me to spend a weekend pass there and his parents were very hospitable and kind. They lived in a large council house which was very comfortable but a bit disorganised as there wasn't a clock in the house and nobody but Ron's father had a watch. I suppose they must have had a radio but I can't remember it ever being on. Mr. Street drove a van, delivering newspapers to newsagents' shops and started work about three in the morning. The first day I awoke in daylight, dressed and found Ron in the kitchen making toast. I joined him, we had breakfast, washed and shaved and went out in the bright sunshine. It was very quiet, there was no traffic on the nearby main road and nobody about. We came to Mitcham Junction station where the platform clock showed the time-0615. We went back to Ron's house where his mother was preparing breakfast, which we ate thankfully.

The enemy I made was Jock Quin of the Royal Scots. He took a dislike to me, understandably, because I took his girl friend to the pictures. I didn't know she was his girl friend since she said she was married to a sergeant in the Irish Guards in Germany, which was bad enough. We didn't hit it off

and I only took her out the once but, coupled with the fact that I was a mouthy Englishman, it was enough. The evening before we passed out from Gatton Park nearly everyone stayed in the billet preparing for the following day's parade. Quin had gone into town and returned just before lights out, a formality which was completely ignored. He was drunk. He swayed over and stood in front of me. "Gifford!", he slurred, "you're a fuckin' bastard, so y'are. Ah'm goin' to knock the livin' shite out of you." So saying he lunged forward with his right fist. I flinched away from it, he overbalanced and, as he fell forward, I hit him just below his left eye. He lay on the floor for a minute or so then got to his feet and tottered off to his bedspace where he collapsed onto his bed, crying. One of his friends went over to him to assess the damage. Quin gasped out, between his sobs, "Did you see that, Watty?, did you see that bastard, Gifford hit me?. He hit me, Watty and I never touched him. I'll have a black eye for the parade to-morrow and I told ma mither there'd be a nice photograph for her". And he did, a beautiful shiner completely spoiled his appearance. It showed up well on the photograph. We went on leave that afternoon and I never met Jock Quin again. I did hear of him, though, some weeks later. He had been posted to Southampton and had become involved, with several others, in stealing from the docks. He was court-martialled, given detention and returned to the Royal Scots in disgrace.

We were promoted to lance corporal and sent on ten days leave before joining our new units. I had been posted to 160 Provost Company at Bulford on Salisbury Plain along with Ron Street. Sitting on the train at King's Cross, waiting for it to depart, I noticed three airmen pass, one of them was Ken Francis. I tapped on the window, attracted his attention and we travelled together. Ken had invited his two friends home on a 48 hour pass. One was a tall, fair haired young fellow from the Irish Republic, the other, coloured, from Jamaica. The following day was a Saturday and Ken suggested that I should call at his house to see his parents and then the four of us could go to the Statute Fair, which was finishing its week in the town; he thought his friends would enjoy it.

It was a fine May evening, the fairground was comfortably crowded. We split up, Ken and I going one way his friends the other, to make it easier to pick up girls. Barely a minute later I saw two stylishly-dressed, attractive young ladies coming towards us, one of them was June Samuels, who I had last seen in the darkened dining hall of the Brighowgate Homes. She had started work as an apprentice hairdresser, the other girl was a colleague. June took my arm, leaving her friend, who was the more attractive of the two, with Ken. We went on one of the rides which whirled us round violently, causing June to cling to me in a satisfying

way until her skirt rode up well above her knees. She laughed and pulled it down after making sure I had had a good look. I might have written the script myself. Not only was I fixed up for the evening, I had nine more days of leave in which to enjoy the favours of this lovely girl. There was, however, a fly in the ointment, or rather two: Ken's friends. Inevitably we soon met up with them. They had not been successful and were still unattached. The problem was soon resolved, the Jamaican attached himself to Ken and his lady, the Irishman to me; or rather to June who slipped her arm through his and gave him her attention. This wasn't what I had in mind at all. Ken was all right, the Jamaican, realising that a coloured man arm in arm with a white girl would not be well received by the local yobs, sensibly kept apart. I trailed along with them for a while and then, taking advantage of the increasing crowd, deliberately became separated, melted away to the nearest bus stop, went into town and got drunk.

It was the only time in my life that I did such a thing. Not getting drunk, I did that several times over the years, but deliberately setting out to do it. I did a pub crawl round the Old Market Place, I hadn't yet developed a taste for beer, whisky was under the counter, so I drank gin and orange, which went down easily. I finished up in the Marquis of Granby in the Bull Ring, demolished long ago. I have no idea how many I drank, it struck me that it was too many when I had difficulty focussing and my lips couldn't seem to form words properly. I realised that it was time to stop drinking and walk home, the fresh air would sober me up. For a while I managed to make my way along Chantry Lane, Littlefield Lane and Cromwell Road, unsteadily but still in control. I turned into Marshall Avenue, aiming for the back way of our house and began to find it harder and harder to stay upright. Somehow I managed to totter from lamppost to lamppost until, near the corner of Norman Road, the pavement suddenly rose up and hit me in the face. I lay there for a while then, gathering up my dwindling resources, somehow managed to get to my feet. As I stood swaying, trying to get my bearings, a privet hedge seemed to swivel round, hitting my legs and causing me to collapse over it into a front garden. For a while I lay in a flowerbed, wondering why it seemed to be tilting, sending me into a sideslip. I felt terrible and decided that I had to get home at all costs as I was going to be sick before long. With a supreme effort I man-

aged to pull myself upright with the aid of the privet hedge and reeled the short distance to our back door, opened it and fell in. As on so many occasions, Gran came to my rescue. She took one look at me and realised what had happened. Kitty was at work, Evelynne was asleep; somehow Gran propelled me into the bedroom, took off my battledress and pushed me onto the bed. For a few minutes I lay there until, once again, the bed tilted, I went into a sideslip and the sickness came on again. This time it was irresistible. Before I could get off the bed I was violently sick all over it and up the wall as well. I then passed out.

I was awakened by Kitty shaking me and shouting in my ear. It took me some time to remember where I was and what had happened. I was in a pitiful state. The pillows and bedcover were still damp with vomit as were my shirt and underpants. Kitty found a mirror and held it so I could look at myself. I looked terrible, there was a large red swelling and graze on my forehead, which accounted for the throbbing pain and the spots of blood on the pillow. The swelling partly closed my right eye. I looked as if I had been in a free fight. Worst of all was the smell, the bedroom stank like a distillery. I felt ghastly, for a moment I thought I was going to be sick again but managed to control myself. I tried to lie down but Kitty dragged me up and pushed me into the bathroom, telling me to get a bath before I did anything else. I passed the day in a daze; Kitty made me strip the bed and re-make it with clean bedclothes, then took £1 from me to pay for the laundry.

I spent the next few days recovering, on the few occasions I went out I had to wear my old civvy clothes while my uniform was cleaned. By the time I set off for Bulford I was fully recovered except for the swelling over my right eye which coincided exactly with the brim of my uniform cap which I packed in my kitbag, wearing my infantry beret (Canadian) instead. I never got into such a bad state again and never again drank gin and orange. Almost fifty years later the thought of it makes me feel sick.

Bulford Camp is at the centre of the Salisbury Plain garrison. The Provost Company barracks had been built just before the war and were very comfortable, everybody agreed that it was a good unit to be in and that we were lucky to be there when we might have gone with several others from Gatton Park to 158 Provost Company at Aldershot, which was said to be far worse than the Depot and not much better than the Glasshouse. I did my first duty there—foot patrol in the village of Amesbury with Ron Street, part of which was spent in the back of the small cinema snogging with the usherettes. After a few days of very civilised life at Bulford I was posted to the Salisbury detach-

ment, about eleven miles away, parting from Ron Street. The detachment, consisting of about ten lance corporals under the command of a sergeant and corporal, was based in an office in a large block belonging to Southern Command HQ in the St. Paul's Road district of the city and had no other premises. We were billeted in a nearby YMCA hostel except for the Sergeant and Corporal who lived in civvy lodgings with their wives. In many ways it was like being in a civilian job, we worked regular hours, there were no parades or inspections and, as long as we turned up for duty on time, sober and reasonably smart, the sergeant left us alone. He was a decent man who had been in the army for years and had only a short time to go until being pensioned off; he was all in favour of a quiet life and ran the detachment accordingly: I wish I could remember his name. Two of the lance corporals were ex Guardsmen and kept to themselves, the rest of us got along well enough without ever having any sense of being a unit, probably caused by our disorganised living conditions. The YMCA had been a church hall and had all the home comforts one would expect in such a place. The old timers, who had been in the detachment longest, lived in a small dormitory on an upstairs floor which could be locked; newcomers like me lived in the main dormitory on the ground floor which also lodged transient servicemen and was open to all. There was no security of any kind but I can't remember losing anything while I was there. The warden was a seedy elderly ex officer type who reminded me of the warden of the Highgate Youth Hostel. He and the two motherly ladies who were his assistants kept the place clean and tidy and provided rudimentary meals, mostly out of tins. We had to pay ^{for} this high living and were given a "living out allowance" to cover it. I can't remember how much it was but it easily covered our expenditure at the YMCA and left something over for extra meals in a café near the station. Our duties were mainly foot patrols in the town or Orderly Corporal (ie clerk) in the office. Since I was easily the most literate and the best typist I tended to spend most of the time as Orderly Corporal. Considering the large number of troops in the area, including a battalion of the Parachute Regiment, there was very little trouble for the foot patrols to deal with. The old sweats who had fought in the war had nearly all been demobilised ("demobbed") and a large proportion of the rest were due to be demobbed within a few months and weren't inclined to risk trouble which might keep them in the Army for longer than necessary. The new generation, to which I belonged, had been brainwashed into docility by wartime propaganda and behaved themselves. This included the Parachute Regiment who were sent back to their units in the infantry if they were put on a charge by the Military Police.

After three months in this beautiful old city, living the life of Riley, I volunteered for a draft overseas—anywhere that was going. I cannot now rem-

ember exactly why I did this, it wasn't ambition, I realised that I would never be a success in the Military Police any more than I had been in the infantry. I think it was simply the feeling that, at Salisbury, I was neither one thing or the other, not a civilian but not a proper soldier either. I liked the place, particularly the Cathedral with its beautiful Close, the narrow streets around it and the bridge carrying the main street over the River Avon, the layout little changed from mediaeval days. There were several cinemas, a theatre and several bookshops, one of them said to be the largest second hand bookshop in the country. I would have been happy there as a full civilian but I had joined up to be a soldier and it looked as if I should have to go abroad to do it. In mid--August I was posted to the 48th Division Provost Company, a transit camp, near Horsham, in Sussex, to join a draft going to the Central Mediterranean Force, which was occupying Italy and the British Zone of Austria.

Ron Street had been posted to 159 Provost Company in Somerset but two other Gatton Park comrades--Pete Wells and Don Turner--were on the same draft. We got drunk in the mess the night before leaving Bulford and I have only the vaguest memory of the journey from Bulford to Horsham, which involved our changing at Waterloo. The camp, called Monks Common, was well outside the town, fortunately being on a route of the ubiquitous London Country buses. It consisted entirely of Nissen huts and was almost new, having been built during the war to house Canadian or American troops. It was the only place I was ever in that had, literally, communal lavatories where you sat gregariously excreting with twenty others in a long line. We were lucky to be there for only a few days in mid-August; God knows what it must have been like in Winter.

All transit camps seem to be in a state of chaos but somehow carry out their function efficiently. We spent two days waiting about for medicals, injections, documents and anything else they could think up, then were sent on embarkation leave. I remember only one thing about it--going to see Harry and being given a pint of bitter, which I had learned to enjoy in the Salisbury pubs, £5 and some good advice about the dangers lurking for young soldiers between the legs of attractive, compliant young women. By this time I knew about his misfortune during my childhood and realised that he knew what he was talking about. I took notice of what he said, it supplemented a lecture we had been given at Horsham on the high rates of VD in Western Europe and the need for extreme care in our dealings with the female population. There had been a significant increase in the VD rate in England as well during the war, to the extent that laws were passed making it an offence to let such a disease go untreated and knowingly to transmit an infection. Ministry of

Health adverts were published in the papers and posters appeared in public toilets, graphically describing the symptoms and publicising the address of the nearest VD clinic. Grimsby's was at 38, Queen Street, which quickly became the best-known address in the town.

For some reason I travelled back to London on a late train, arriving about eleven o'clock in the evening. I decided to have a meal at the Corner House, which stayed open all night, and travelled to Piccadilly Circus on the Underground. It was the first time I had been in the West End so late at night and I was amazed. It was at least as crowded as on a normal afternoon, most of the men were in the services and, standing along the pavement, were a large number of women and girls, every one of them a prostitute. There were hundreds. I was propositioned twice before I had properly emerged from the Underground. I made my way to the Corner House through the crowds, ignoring the constant invitations to have a good time, and had my supper; by the time I had finished it was nearly midnight.

The crowds were thicker, I walked slowly towards Leicester Square, being solicited every few steps by heavily made-up girls and women, many of them very attractive. At last one of them smiled as she propositioned me, I stopped. She was dark haired and quite pretty, not much older than me. Like most of her colleagues she wore a blouse, short skirt, nylons, high heeled shoes and carried a handbag; she had very nice legs and spoke with the nasal South London accent. I asked her the price and she said that it was thirty bob (£1-50) for a short time in a taxi or three quid in a nearby room. I opted for the taxi, which sounded safer. We turned into a side street where several taxis were parked, she went up to the first one, opened the door and got in. Before I could follow her she turned, held out her hand and said "Thirty bob, please, darling." I gave her the money and entered the taxi, she tapped on the driver's window and the taxi set off towards Trafalgar Square. It didn't take long, the lady undid my flies, opened her handbag and produced a Durex which she rolled onto my limp penis. She then pulled her skirt up to her waist, revealing her stocking-tops, suspenders and, to my disappointment, the fact that she wasn't wearing a pair of knickers. Despite this the display provoked an erection and, after she had explained the mechanics of the thing, I proceeded to lose my virginity as we drove down Whitehall. I came almost immediately and withdrew. She took the Durex off my penis and put it in her handbag. She smiled. "There!, was that nice?", she asked. I replied that it was lovely but, in truth, I hadn't felt a thing. I had had an orgasm without the slightest sensation. She asked if I was stationed in London and I told her I was going abroad, probably to Italy. "My brother was in Italy", she replied, "He was killed at Anzio". Her eyes filled with tears and she took my hand. "Look after yourself,

darling", she said and kissed me lightly on the lips. I think she was probably a nice girl, despite her profession, and also a very practical one. As we alighted from the taxi back in Coventry Street, she asked "Have you got five bob for the taxi, darling?", and held out her hand. I gave it to her and we parted.

I walked along the Strand to Waterloo, my mind full of my first real sexual encounter. I had the sense to realise that it couldn't possibly be typical or nobody would ever go out of his way to do it. I began to have misgivings. I remembered Harry's advice and the VD lecture. I had worn a Durex but supposing it was torn?; I remembered with a shudder how she had carefully put it into her handbag after removing it from my penis. What happened to it next? Had I been the first to wear it? God knew who she had been with before me, at least I hadn't been in contact for very long, which might make a difference. As I walked over Waterloo Bridge, my eyes cast down, I saw something familiar lying on the pavement. I bent and picked it up. It was a pound note, which I put in my wallet; at least I had got some of my money back, whatever else I might have got.

I spent the rest of the night in the waiting room at Waterloo with several of my cronies who had arranged to meet there. I kept my worries to myself and spent the last few days at Horsham in a state of subdued anxiety, carefully watching for any of the symptoms of gonorrhoea or syphilis which I had memorised from a notice in the Gents' toilet at Waterloo. None appeared and I gradually forgot my worries in the excitement of going abroad for the first time.

We left Horsham in a convoy of army trucks and spent the night in Dover Castle. The following morning, 26th August, 1946, we crossed the Channel on one of the ferries, restricted to military use only. My first sight of France was the quayside at Calais surrounded by a large area of rubble with a number of temporary huts and cabins littered about, a particularly large group of them housed the transit camp to which we were directed. In the distance I could see the spire of Calais Town Hall, which I recognised from photographs. This was Calais Nord, the old, mediaeval town which had been destroyed during the Rifle Brigade's stand in June, 1940, covering the BEF's retreat to Dunkirk.

The train that took us from Calais was called "Medloc", short for "Mediterranean Lines of Communication". The journey took 46 hours and passed through France, Germany and Austria to Villach in the Austrian province of Carinthia, not far from the Italian border. We travelled in standard German Railways carriages, six to a compartment. There had been no attempt to modify them for the purpose—we did the best we could for sleeping accommodation, making full use of the ample luggage racks. The train pulled into sidings at appropriate times for our meals, I particularly remember one

in the centre of the German city of Karlsruhe. I was pleased to be out of England and took interest in everything I saw. Not long after setting off I noticed two French railwaymen standing in the corridor and decided to try out my French on them. They were friendly and spoke slowly so as to help me and I found my French vocabulary, unused since I left school, had not been forgotten and, after the first halting phrases, that I could converse almost fluently. They were travelling to Lille and one of them pointed out the street in which he lived as we entered that city. We shook hands as they left, after congratulating me on my command of their language and telling me that I was the first British soldier they had met who could sustain a conversation in French. This little incident didn't go unnoticed by my comrades and I had to put up with remarks about toffee-nosed grammar school bastards showing off. If they had shouted "College Bulldog" as well I should have felt quite nostalgic.

We passed through South Germany into Austria through magnificent mountain scenery, at several points going along trestle bridges over deep ravines and gorges. It struck me, looking out of the window to the valley-bottom hundreds of feet below that it would be easy for German terrorists to blow up such a bridge as a train passed over it and kill hundreds of Allied soldiers in one go. None ever did, probably because the Germans realised that they were much better off being occupied by the British and Americans than they would have been under the Russians. In due course we arrived at Villach, stiff and crumpled.

We entered No. 317 Transit Camp where, for the only time, I was billeted under canvas. The sergeant who allocated us to our tents told us not to put our kit on the grassy floor; when somebody asked him why not he replied "You'll soon find out" and left us. It was a bright, sunny afternoon and very hot. We were in a valley, in the distance was a range of mountains, the highest I had seen, somebody who had managed to get hold of a map said they were the Carnic Alps. Looming over them were large, black clouds, rapidly moving towards us. The sky darkened and within minutes there was a downpour of rain which lasted for half an hour. Sheltering in our tent we soon learned why it made good sense to keep our kit off the floor as it was soon awash in several inches of water. There were one or two more showers, none so severe as the first, and we became obsessed by the need to keep everything off the floor.

During our short stay in Villach we were issued with khaki drill uniforms ("KD"). We all had a good laugh as we tried on the ill-fitting shorts, swapping them between us to achieve a better fit, the worst cases being sent back to the Stores for an exchange. Obviously we had to have a lightweight summer uniform for hot climates, battledress was stifling even in England

in the Summer, but I hated those bloody shorts. Worn by six-foot Guardsmen with broad shoulders and narrow hips, immaculately washed and pressed, they looked quite impressive; the vast majority of average height and physique were made to look like overgrown Boy Scouts. As for our middle-aged, overweight NCO's, most of them looked worse than we did and lost most of whatever dignity they possessed. The Americans, who were far better equipped than we were, never wore them. I suppose they were intended to be cooler and more comfortable than slacks but this advantage was cancelled in typical Army fashion by our having to wear thick khaki wollen hoesetops, like socks without feet, which came to just below the knee. The ensemble was completed by thick puttees round our ankles. We only wore them during the daytime, after sunset we had to wear slacks because of the mosquitoes. This meant we could take the wretched hoesetops off and were much more comfortable as a result.

We left Villach on a Saturday night to entrain for Rome, travelling in a leisurely fashion diagonally across Italy. We were the only passengers on the train, I shared a compartment with Don Turner and we were very comfortable. We had breakfast in Padova, lunch in Bologna and supper in Rimini, at which place I noticed something odd. It was dusk on a fine evening, the train was drawn up in a siding and our window gave us a view down a main street. The street lights were on and so was something else—a large number of vivid neon signs. There hadn't been neon signs in England since 1939, even after the war was over. This, we were told, was to save precious fuel which had to be imported for hard currency, principally dollars. As time went on I was to notice more and more that whereas England in 1946 was in a worse state than it had been during the war Italy had quickly reverted to peacetime conditions. The shops were full of good quality clothes and goods of all kinds, including cameras and film. Food of all kinds was freely available in the shops and restaurants. Inflation was said to have affected the civil population severely—the lira was 900 to the pound as opposed to 50 in 1939—but the standard of living of people in employment seemed to be much higher than it would have been in England where bread was about to be rationed for the first time. In Italy the only things which seemed to be on the ration were cigarettes, petrol and vehicle tyres, all of which could be freely obtained on the black market, which was kept well supplied by the Allied armies.

Now we were overseas we got a greatly increased NAAFI ration of 100 cigarettes and a free issue of 50 a week. For the first time in the Army I could smoke as much as I wanted and still have money to spend. The non-smokers did well out of it as their cigarettes fetched 1500 lire (£1.66) on the black market at a time when our pay was £1.75 per week.

I spent the next five weeks at the CMF Depot-182 Provost Company-on the outskirts of Rome in the suburb of Cappannelle, well known for its racecourse. The first four weeks were spent in refresher training and instruction in the very different conditions of Italy. Apart from having to cope with the heat, unfamiliar KD uniform and a change from green to white blanco we had to endure recruit training all over again on the barrack square. We also had to endure the presence of large numbers of mosquitoes, particularly at night, these insects were said to carry malaria and we had to take small yellow Mepacrine tablets as a protection, the whites of our eyes soon turned the same colour, fortunately their only side-effect. We soon appreciated the need to use the mosquito-nets we were issued with and to encourage the lizards which ran about the walls and ceilings of our huts catching the mosquitoes. Any one fool enough to interfere with these creatures was often thumped for his trouble.

On the second afternoon we were marched to the camp cinema which was quite palatial. Like the rest of the permanent buildings it had been built in Fascist days when the site had been a training centre for the Rome fire brigade. An officer in the Medical Corps announced from the stage that the film we were about to see dealt with the subject of VD. It was an American film, made in Hollywood, and contained some scenes which we were not likely to see anywhere else. He strongly advised us to take notice of everything it said. He would be available to answer questions when it had finished.

There then followed the frankest film I have ever seen. It spared us nothing. By the time it ended we had not only learned graphically, in Technicolor, about gonorrhea and syphilis but also about several diseases we had never heard of and infestation with crab lice. Many of the scenes were revolting. The medical officer addressed us again after the film, telling us that everything in it was absolute fact. He himself had dealt with many such cases some of them as bad as those we had just seen. We must always remember that it could happen to us. When we left the cinema we should be issued with a packet called an "ET Kit" ("ET" = "Early Treatment"), containing two tubes of antiseptic cream and two contraceptives. On the cover were printed instructions which we must follow, particularly the one telling us to report to an "ET Centre", usually in the centre of large towns or in any Army Medical Centre, after exposure. There we should be able to wash the relevant parts with a strong antiseptic solution and the medical orderly in attendance would record our Army number and give us a chit recording our attendance at the Centre. If, having done this, we still became infected we must immediately report sick (not to do so being a Court Martial offence) and produce the chit. We should then receive treatment like any other patient and nothing more would be said. If we had not followed instructions we should be treated in extremely

spartan conditions with none of the usual hospital comforts and, on returning to our units, would be charged with having a self-inflicted wound—a serious offence. He asked if there were any questions. Somebody asked where we could obtain further supplies of contraceptives. The Medical Officer replied that they were freely obtainable from ET Centres. He wanted to emphasize that under no circumstances were we to have sex without wearing one. Some idiot then asked what about if we got married to an Italian girl and wanted to have children; after the laughter died down the officer said that any Italian girl marrying a British soldier would be given extremely stringent tests and examinations, he still advised using a contraceptive until further tests showed that the lady was free from infection. We left the cinema in silence, being handed an ET Kit as we went through the exit. I was very thoughtful for several days afterwards. By this time, no symptoms having appeared, I was beginning to think that I had not been infected by my indiscretion in the West End but, as the film had repeated several times, the incubation period for syphilis was from 9 to 90 days: it would be December before I could be certain.

I went into Rome several times on the tram with Don Turner and Pete Wells and saw all the usual sights, on two Sundays we went to Ostia, on the coast where we lounged about on the almost black sand and tried unsuccessfully to get off with whatever Italian ladies looked half way attractive. Despite the favourable exchange rate our money didn't go far but I managed to scrape enough together to buy a box camera and film, at last starting to record my army life and indulging an interest in photography which has increased steadily over the years.

The fifth and last week at Cappannelle was the strangest I ever spent in the Army: they left us to our own devices, no parades, no fatigues, no inspections, nothing. We kept away from our hut after carefully tidying up and sweeping the place out and avoided anywhere that a keen NCO might find us to carry out some useless task. I got roped in to attend a meeting of the Entertainments Committee to discuss the future of the camp cinema, which was very popular. This had been called because of an incident a week or two before when a full house had attended a performance of a longer film than usual which, because of some rule of the Army Kinema Corporation, had to end before the last reel could be shown. There was a terrible outcry about this led, fortunately, by the second in command, Captain Terry, who later became Sir George Terry, Chief Constable of Sussex. Following an incident during which the AKC manager of the cinema was placed under arrest for being improperly dressed, hurried arrangements were made to show the last two reels the following evening at no extra charge. The cinema was packed. The film was "Madame Curie".

The canteen provided an ample supply of writing paper and envelopes

which I used to write to everyone I could think of. I normally wrote to Kitty Evelynne and Gran two or three times a week and occasionally to Ken Francis and Jack Moore but, by this time, to nobody else. I got replies from several people, including Jean Enderby and one of the girls I had met at the Youth Hostel in the Lake District, starting a friendly correspondence which lasted the rest of my Army career. I also wrote to Betty at Mrs. Wells's old address, hoping it would be forwarded, without reply. At the end of the week we were told our postings and that we were to move that evening. Some went to 105 Provost Company in Vienna, some to 111 in Naples and a few, including me, to 112 in Padova in the Veneto province of North Eastern Italy, about 25 miles west of Venice.

We entrained at the Central Station in the evening, travelling in special carriages. As we waited to leave a radio in an American Army office was playing a variety show which ended with Hoagy Carmichael singing his own composition- "Skylark", with full orchestra playing a lush, typical 1940's arrangement and a heavenly choir- the whole works. For some reason this few minutes has stayed in my mind- the warm evening, the great station with its lights and sounds, the Italian smell of Nazionale cigarettes, coffee, lemons and common soap coming from the nearby Buffet, the excitement of being in a foreign country and, above all, the beautiful song. The memory is very vivid.

Joining 112 Provost Company was like joining a completely different army from the one I had become accustomed to. The company HQ was in part of a school in Via Galileo Galilei, not far from the centre of Padova, no attempt had been made to alter the place and we lived in the classrooms. In display cases on the corridor walls were samples of the children's work from the Twenties and Thirties, the date on the headings being followed by "Anno V", "Anno VIII" etc, showing the number of years since the Fascist takeover in 1922. There was no attempt to keep the place in military order, no inspections and no parades; in many ways it reminded me of Salisbury Detachment on a much larger scale. Like most units in the Army at that time there were far too many of us for the useful work to be done. There were no fatigues or cleaning duties which were done by Italian civilians and Germans who were no longer called "prisoners of war" but "Separated Enemy Personnel" or SEP's.

I soon learned my way round the city centre through the constant foot patrols that were our main duty and usually uneventful. I liked the arcaded streets and piazzas, the many mediaeval churches and the Cathedral which, I am ashamed to admit, I never entered. Still, I never entered Salisbury Cathedral either. Every Sunday morning a chorus of bells started ringing at about six o'clock and continued for several hours. Each church seemed to have just

the one bell, all on different notes, every now and then being punctuated by the deep BONGNGNGNG of the Cathedral, which wasn't far away and vibrated the whole building. I liked exploring the city on off-duty evenings, going into the many bars and trying the vast range of drinks on display, far more than any English pub would have. I liked the liqueurs best, I particularly remember Strega, Prunella, Anice, Menta and Doppio Kummel which came in a bottle shaped like a naked woman. They were very cheap and much stronger than they seemed. Fortunately I had learned when to stop and seemed to have inherited Harry's head for drink so I always managed to return to the billet under my own steam in good order. In the course of these expeditions I inevitably encountered some of the city's many prostitutes. In those days their profession was legal in Italy and controlled by a department of the police called the "Squadra Buon Costume", literally the "Good Behaviour Squad". The girls carried an official identity card which allowed them to work in licensed brothels and solicit in bars. They were not allowed to patrol the streets. The memory of the film I had seen at Cappannelle was still strong and, even when half shot at, I managed to resist temptation, but it was difficult.

Padova has one of Italy's foremost universities and the students were a big feature in the life of the city. On special occasions they wore curious hats, something like the one Robin Hood is usually portrayed in, coming to a point at the front. These were in different colours for different faculties and were decorated by having such things as contraceptives, model lavatories and sanitary towels dangling from them. Every now and then they rioted and we were called out to help the civil police to restore order. This wasn't difficult as little harm was ever done, certainly not in the only one I was involved in. They usually managed to derail a tram in strategic, narrow main streets, enough to jam all traffic for several hours, during which time the students strolled about in groups shouting slogans. The only one I can remember is "Inglese Via", equivalent to "Brits Out", used in Northern Ireland today. Nothing changes.

Another of the students' less attractive activities was to chastise local girls who went out with British soldiers, usually by cutting most of their hair off. This didn't apply to the prostitutes, who were left alone to ply their trade, but only to the more respectable class of girls. It had a profound effect; such girls would have nothing to do with the troops who had to try their luck with the British ATS (WRAC) girls attached to GHQ CMF, which had just moved to the city. Being in great demand the ATS girls could pick and choose and sensibly consorted with the officers and senior NCO's. Privates and lance corporals were nowhere.

I have found my old Military Police notebooks covering 1946-47. Reading the one covering this period it is interesting to find how much of it I remember, in some cases inaccurately. On 10th October I appear to have been on special traffic duty at Treviso, a town about 25 miles north east of Padova, from 1330 hours. I remember it well but in my mind it was early morning rather than afternoon. I must accept the written evidence even though the duty was at the south end of a road bridge over the River Piave near a village called San Dona di Piave; Treviso was the nearest large town. I didn't know at the time but San Dona is in the history books as the limit of the Austro-German advance into Italy following their defeat of the Italian Army at Caporetto in the Autumn of 1917. It was a beautiful Autumn day, the river was virtually dry with a narrow trickle of water down the middle, the river bed had been dried almost white by the summer sun. I was accompanied by an Italian Carabinieri, an American MP and a gunner in the Royal Artillery. Our instructions were to search all vehicles for black market goods and confiscate them, any questions of proceedings against civilians were handled by the Carabinieri, one of our sergeants was in command of the post, seated in a nearby hut. There wasn't a lot of traffic, most of it military. We didn't find much beyond the odd pack of Camels or Gold Flake that came in very handy and never found their way back to the sergeant who was supposed to receive all confiscated goods. We gave him a few odds and ends of allied equipment but the most common item on the black market couldn't be touched even though every vehicle on the road was using it-petrol. At length the American MP hit the jackpot, finding five cartons of Chesterfields-one each and one for the sergeant. I took it to him and handed it over. The next day, back in Padova he took me to one side. "You know that carton of fags you handed me yesterday?" I looked at him, "What carton of fags, Sarge?". He grinned and winked, it was the right thing to say. "I'll take you with me on the next traffic check, too", he said.

I suppose the foregoing little escapade makes me seem like some kind of petty thief; if I was then so was virtually every other Allied soldier in a position to do himself a bit of good now and then. Black market goods were fair game, the civilians who had them shouldn't have had them and didn't complain if we confiscated them without further action. If we handed them in they would only have been kept by somebody else up the line so we might as well benefit, at least we had carried out most of our duty by finding them in the first place. At least that was the thought I comforted myself with.

In mid-October I was called to the Orderly Room and told that I had been selected to attend a three-month course in Vienna to learn the duties of an Army Clerk. If I completed it successfully I should become a permanent

member of the Orderly Room staff and would almost certainly be promoted to full corporal with the chance to follow a career which would lead to senior NCO rank before very long. This was good news indeed. I had given^{up} all hope of promotion as a policeman, I should certainly do better as a clerk. The course started in early November.

In the meantime I carried on as before with the round of duties and tours of the city bars, taking care to keep my nose clean until the course began. One of the tasks devised to give us something to do was called "point duty". It had nothing to do with directing traffic but involved standing for five hours, with a short meal break, at selected "points" on the main roads into the city centre. We had to check Allied vehicles and ensure that they were on a legitimate journey and, if necessary, re-direct trucks over 15cwt capacity away from the narrow central streets that were very congested. On 26th October, a Saturday, I was on point duty at the south end of the Via Roma, one of the main streets, where it joins a large square called Prato della Valle. It was a cold, dull, dreary day, by mid-afternoon I was bored to tears. At 1515 I was visited by the Orderly Sergeant who asked if I was all right, he thought I looked ill. Apart from a slight head cold and acute boredom there was nothing wrong with me so I said "I'm all right, Sarge, just got a bit of a headache, that's all". "You look ill to me", he replied (he was a good sort) "I'm booking you off duty, you can go on a special sick report", and took me back to Company HQ in his jeep. I gathered my small kit together and he drove me to the Medical Centre. Up to this point everything was going well. I expected to be examined by a typical Army MO who would give me some aspirin and put me on light duties for a couple of days, knowing that if there was anything seriously wrong with me I should be brought back to him in quick time. Unfortunately I was seen by a female MO with brand new pips on her shoulders. She gave me a thorough examination and then panicked. She wrote "Migraine? Sinus? Brain Tumour?" on my sick report and sent me in an ambulance to 22nd British General Hospital at Mestre, about 20 miles away to the east, at the far end of the Autostrada. If it hadn't been for the imminence of the clerical course I should have been pleased to spend a few days in the relative luxury of hospital; there was nothing wrong with me but I couldn't be accused of malingering (a popular army pastime and a serious offence if you got caught out) as the Orderly Sergeant had sent me on sick report and the lady MO had sent me to hospital after making a diagnosis. I had told the sergeant I was all right and, when the MO asked where it hurt, I had indicated my right temple and said (truthfully) that it didn't hurt much.

I spent the next six weeks in hospital and (I can hardly bring myself to admit it) convalescent depot. After ten days in 22nd General I was moved

in an ambulance to 31st General at Klagenfurt in Austria, having been diagnosed as suffering from acute sinusitis. 31st was a former German Army hospital and had an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department where, after a few days, I underwent a minor operation to irrigate my sinuses. This made me feel genuinely ill for a day or two and, when I recovered, they decided I needed time to recuperate properly and sent me to a convalescent depot at Velden, a few miles from Klagenfurt, on the banks of a lake called the Wörthersee.

The depot had been a hotel before the war and was run by the Red Cross. It was very comfortable, we were waited on at table, the meals were prepared by the former hotel staff and we slept between sheets in twin-bedded rooms. It had a well stocked library and was in beautiful surroundings. If it had been up to me I would have spent the rest of my army service there. As it was I managed to stretch my convalescence out to 19 days and returned to Padova on 6th December. I don't know whether I should be ashamed of this episode or not. Apart from the few days after my sinuses were irrigated there was nothing wrong with me, anyone would feel groggy after having a metal tube rammed up his nose and lukewarm liquid pumped into it. I suppose I could have been more insistent when the Orderly Sergeant booked me off duty and put me on a special sick report. Once the lady MO had panicked and covered her back by attributing my headache to several increasingly serious possibilities I had to go along with it. As long as I stuck to the headache I was all right; if I had a miraculous recovery I might be in serious trouble. I have suffered for it, being a victim of sinusitis almost every winter ever since.

I had missed the clerical course and resigned myself to returning to police duties. What little hope I had of making a decent career in the Army had gone. I decided to get out of it as soon as I could, by whatever means short of desertion. I had barely unpacked my kit, however, when I was told to pack it again having been posted to the company's most distant detachment at Cortina d'Ampezzo, a winter sports resort in the Dolomites, over 100 miles north of Padova. It had been taken over by the Allied Armies as a leave centre for troops and it was regarded as a cushy number. I was driven there in a jeep with two others who were dropped off at Treviso. The further north we went, travelling steadily uphill, the colder it became. Miles before we reached Cortina there was a thick covering of snow. The detachment was billeted in a large villa on the edge of the town. There were the usual duties with the addition of a daily recce trip in a jeep to assess the state of the main roads south as far as the next detachment at Longarone, about 35 miles away. Apart from that the main duties were evening foot patrols to assist British drunks, stop fights and clear all the bars at midnight. I met an old friend

from Gatton Park and Cappannelle days-Don Turner, which was a good thing as the rest of the detachment were typical military policemen whose main recreations were playing darts, three card brag and polishing their boots. To make matters worse I got on the wrong side of the sergeant who had been in the cavalry before the war, a typical old-time regular. Once he found out that I had been to grammar school and had been seen reading books and such intellectual magazines as "Picture Post" and "Time" he decided I thought myself to be superior to semi-literates like him (I did, actually) and treated me accordingly. This apart I quite enjoyed myself at Cortina. The villa had a magnificent view of the Dolomites to the north of the town. The camera I had bought in Rome had been stolen from my kit while I was in hospital so I never took any pictures. The colours were breath-taking. The mountains were yellow-ochre, the tops covered with dazzling white snow against the deep blue sky. The thing I remember most, however, is the silence, broken very occasionally by the sound of snow chains on passing vehicles.

Every evening I spent either on foot patrol or out on the town with Don Turner, touring the bars or visiting one or other of the cinemas. It didn't make much difference whether we were on duty or not as we always returned to the billet drunk. There was a reason for this-the bar-owners liked to keep in with the military police and we were offered drinks as we cleared the bars at midnight. There were a lot of them so by the time we had cleared them all it was all we could do to get back to the villa in reasonable order. I remember several times having difficulty in signing my name in the log book. Off duty it was even worse as we never had to pay for drinks and had more time. Somehow I managed to avoid trouble, despite Sergeant Lewis's enmity, but my conduct didn't go unnoticed.

The second in command was Corporal George Smith, good natured and easy going, who had the ill luck to contract secondary syphilis long before I met him. To make matters worse everybody knew about it and he was known behind his back throughout the company as "Syph" Smith. In those days treatment was a slow business and, although most of the symptoms had vanished, his nervous system was affected to the extent that he couldn't keep still. Standing up he kept breaking into a shuffling tap-dance, sitting at the meal table he kept up a tattoo with his knife and fork, at his desk he did the same with two pencils. We pretended not to notice anything out of the ordinary..

After I had been at Cortina for a fortnight Cpl. Smith buttonholed me. "Gifford", he said, "either you or Turner will have to go before you get into serious trouble. Sarge has had enough of you and asked me to have a quiet word. One of you will be posted to Longarone, down the road, he would sooner it was you". I laughed, we didn't use the term then but Longarone was the absolute pits. A large village with nothing but a few run down bars for amusement, the detachment was billeted in a requisitioned house and had little

in the way of comfort."OK Corp,I'll go,I'll be an alcoholic if I stay here much longer".He grinned,"you do realise,then",and patted me on the shoulder, breaking into a dance step as he did so.I left Cortina the next morning,22nd December,with the recce patrol.

Longarone wasn't at all bad.I missed Don Turner and the night life of Cortina which,for some reason,didn't include girls or,at least,I never found any.My new comrades were much more congenial than those I had left.One of them was Harry Pexman who lived in Cleethorpes and had travelled to Gatton Park with me in the contingent from Lincoln.The only serious duty was a road recce from Longarone to Conegliano,about 40 miles to the south.There were no foot patrols since we were the only troops for miles so we did things like "orderly corporal","information post" and "telephone orderly" which involved sitting by the dayroom fire,listening to the radio.The cleaning and cooking were done by local civilians,two unusually plain girls and an elderly man.Among our number were two REME craftsmen with a 10 ton Mack recovery truck and two RAMC medical orderlies who were there in case of accidents on the icy roads and were good company.The only time I can remember any serious drinking was on New Year's Eve when we all went to the largest bar in the village for the evening and tottered back to the billet in the small hours.I never again drank as much as I did in Cortina.I thought I was joking when I told Corporal Smith that I should become an alcoholic if I stayed there,in fact it wasn't far from the truth.

I left Longarone on 5th January,1947 to go on leave,I was lucky.Thanks to an outcry in the British press the War Office had started regular leave to the UK a few months earlier:a lot of my comrades had not had leave for more than a year.I went back to Padova and set off on the long journey home via Villach and Calais the following day.

I never saw Longarone again but it was in the news years later.The village lay on the west side of the valley of the River Piave,a range of hills rose steeply behind it.A few miles to the north,on the opposite side of the valley,a dam had been built across a gorge to contain the waters of the Vaiont,a tributary of the Piave.In the Spring of 1963,following heavy rain combined with the melting snow from the mountains,the dam burst.Millions of tonnes of water poured across the valley,hitting the steep hillside which diverted the torrent south along the west side of the valley floor,scraping Longarone from the face of the earth.Almost 2000 people lost their lives,the greater part of the population.I have often wished to visit the area again to see whether it has been rebuilt,but I don't suppose I ever shall.

I was glad to be home again although by then I had lost the homesickness of my first months in the Army.Jack and Ken were home and I regaled

them with stories of my adventures in Italy until I noticed a certain coolness, realised that I was overdoing things and shut up. Kitty had told me that Harry had been ill in Hospital with pneumonia—he was now back at the Railway, Gran had been to see him and said he looked very bad.

I went to the Railway and was surprised by the deterioration in Harry's appearance, he looked 74 rather than 54. He hadn't resumed work but was getting up for a few hours a day and said that he felt a lot better now that he was out of hospital. He commented on my shabby uniform and I explained that it was my second best one that I had worn on the journey home, my best (Canadian) battledress was being cleaned. We then had the longest conversation I can remember having with him. He asked about Italy and the Army and was interested in all I had to tell him. He was amused by my six weeks skive in hospital, particularly the convalescent home. He grew tired after an hour or so and asked me to call and see him before I went back. I did this on my last day at home, wearing my best battledress; he looked worse and we didn't talk for so long. He gave me £10 and said that he was looking forward to us going to race meetings together now I was grown up. We shook hands and I told him to look after himself. I never saw him again.

I set off back to Italy on 30th January, 1947. The weather had been unseasonably mild while I had been home, once or twice I went out in shirt sleeve order, wearing a KD shirt with the CMF leaping gazelle flashes and brass CMP titles on the epaulettes (there were no Military Police in Grimsby). I changed trains at Peterborough where a bitterly cold wind was blowing down the platform, the temperature had dropped by several degrees. It was the start of the terrible Winter of 1947, the worst since accurate records were kept. Snow fell for several days until the whole country was covered. The railways came to a standstill nearly everywhere and the distribution of coal (the main fuel at the time) from the pitheads ceased. There were power cuts and a serious risk of national breakdown. It was the first real test of the new Labour government and they only just got away with it. The first snowflakes were falling as the ferry left Dover, the only sign of the blizzard raging further north.

Back in Padova there had been a significant improvement—the lira had been devalued and was now 2200 to the pound, more than doubling the value of our pay. The only ones to lose were the non-smokers as the black market price of cigarettes remained the same. Don Turner was back from Cortina and we resumed our friendship, touring the bars together but drinking a lot less than we had in December. The round of foot patrols, guard and point duties continued. The only bit of excitement was on 11th February when I was one of a special squad sent to Verona, about 70 miles away to carry out a surprise black market purge. It was interesting to see another historic city but

the purge was a complete waste of time, I don't remember finding anything at all, apart from the odd pack of cigarettes. Either the people of Verona were very law-abiding or, more likely, word had got out.

During this time the radio news bulletins relayed harrowing details of the Arctic conditions in Britain and the serious state of the country. Factories, mills, steelworks and shipyards were closed down for lack of coal and electricity even if their workers could manage to reach them. Unemployment reached pre-war levels at the same time as there was a shortage of labour to clear the roads and railways. After a delay the mail began to trickle through and Kitty's letters described how they managed to keep going. Grimsby hadn't been so badly affected as some places but there was snow everywhere, power cuts and a shortage of coal. She, Gran and Evelynne were lucky, they had a delivery of coal while I was home and so managed to keep the house warm. The buses were running so she and Evelynne could get to work and Gran could get to the shops. She hadn't heard anything of Harry but somebody had been in the Railway and said they had seen him in the Bar.

One evening in mid-February, Don Turner being on duty, I went to a bar on the Via Roma, I had been there before with Don and knew that it was patronised by the local prostitutes. Time had passed, I knew I was free from infection and the impact of the VD film had faded. I didn't go there deliberately to get fixed up but just to see what was on offer. I recognised several of the girls and didn't fancy any of them until I noticed one with peroxide blonde hair, wearing a fur coat. Like the others she was heavily made up and showing a discreet amount of leg. I caught her eye and, after a minute or so she smiled and raised her eyebrows enquiringly. I nodded, she got up from her seat and went out of the door, I followed. The arrangements were soon made - 1000 lire for her and 500 lire for the room - 75p altogether. She slipped her arm through mine as we walked to a nearby back street. By this time I could converse in simple Italian, thanks to school Latin, an Army Italian grammar and a pocket dictionary. She told me her name, which I have forgotten, and we chatted amiably, she said she was Hungarian, which explained why her Italian was little better than mine. She was more likely German or Austrian but could have been anything. In Northern Italy in 1947 people had all sorts of reasons to adopt a temporary nationality and identity papers were available to order on the black market. We stopped at a street door, she knocked and we were admitted by an elderly woman who exchanged a few words with her in a language I didn't recognise. She led the way down a narrow hallway and opened a door, switching on a light as she did so. We entered a large, well-furnished room,

the main feature being a large double bed; everything was clean and tidy. The concierge left us, closing the door behind her. My temporary girl friend put her arms round my neck and kissed me, then she undid her fur coat, turning so that I could help her off with it. She made me turn my back on her, telling me not to move until she told me to. I heard the rustling of clothes, she said "fa bene" (OK) and I turned round. At last I was looking at an attractive woman without her dress on. It was the most erotic thing I had ever seen, for one awful moment I thought I was going to have an orgasm there and then but, somehow, I managed to control myself. She wasn't beautiful, more what the French call "jolie laide", in later years the character Jill in "Crossroads" reminded me of her. She smiled as I stared at her. She was slim with an adequate bosom, restrained by a white brassiere which had seen better days. Her legs were her best feature, long and shapely, set off by high heeled court shoes in a kind of grey imitation snakeskin that I could remember ladies wearing before the war. She was wearing sheer nylons, held up by plain elastic garters, and a pair of brief, silk knickers. She could have got rid of me in ten minutes if she had wanted to but, for whatever reason, she took her time and I enjoyed my first real sexual encounter with a woman who knew exactly what ^{she} was doing and wanted me to do. It took well over an hour, towards the end I put on a contraceptive from my ET pack and entered her, it didn't last much longer than it had going down Whitehall but at least I felt it this time, every last drop.

I gave her the 1500 lire, she kissed me and asked when we were going to spend the night together. I could think of nothing I would have liked better at that moment and, in fact, it wouldn't have been difficult as 112 Provost Company was so lax we could come and go as we pleased. I said I would see her in the bar where we had met and departed, hurrying to the ET Centre in Via San Francesco where I faithfully followed the laid down procedure, receiving a chit with my number on to certify that I had done so. I suppose really that was when I lost my virginity, in the sense of enjoying sex; the London episode didn't count as the only enjoyable bit had been the girl pulling her skirt up. One thing was certain anyway—Padova prostitutes beat hell out of London ones, giving a hundred times the pleasure for half the money.

On the evening of 27th February I was called to the Orderly Room and handed a telegram from Kitty, saying that Harry had died on the 22nd and asking me to come home if I could. I showed it to the Orderly Sergeant who took it in to the Company Commander's office, calling me in a few minutes later. The OC pointed out that I should obviously not be in time for the funeral which had probably already taken place. He asked if there were any special circumstances which would warrant compassionate leave. I explained that Harry had been a licensee and that somebody would have to run the Railway until a new landlord took over; my mother was in poor health and wouldn't be able to cope with it. He asked a few more questions and then dismissed me, saying that he would see me in the morning. I was called in from point duty the following day and told I had been granted twelve days compassionate leave, to pack my kit and catch the Medloc train that afternoon.

I wasn't surprised to learn of Harry's death, he had looked so ill when I had last seen him and Kitty had said that he would have died of pneumonia in December if he hadn't been rushed into hospital by his father who had called to see him unexpectedly. I didn't feel any emotion at all, even though he had been much more fatherly towards me now that I was a soldier and almost grown up. I hadn't forgotten his behaviour during the last months at the Railway and remembered how he had refused to let us take the dog Prince and the parrot when Kitty moved us to Fannystone Road. I am a lot older now than he was when he died and wish I knew more about him with the knowledge of the world and experience of life to see the many shades of grey rather than the sharp blacks and whites of my youth. This is, of course the main reason I am writing this autobiography so that you will know a lot more about me than I know about him.

I phoned the Railway from King's Cross after I landed in England on 4th March and told Kitty I should get to Grimsby late that evening. Most of the snow had gone but it was bitterly cold. The shortage of fuel, particularly coal, was still critical although the railways were running and industry had started up: there were still severe restrictions on the use of electricity. I thought of the bright lights and neon signs in Padova, a former enemy city in a country which was supposed to have lost the war.

I arrived at Town station about 10pm. It was in almost complete darkness with just the odd light here and there, the collector was checking the tickets by the light of a torch. Uncle Bert was waiting at the barrier, we exchanged greetings and he told me that Kitty was expecting me at the Railway. There were no buses at that time of night so we managed to get a taxi which trundled slowly through the dark streets. Kitty let us in and greeted me with "It's all ours, every penny!". I digested this news as she hugged me and led the way upstairs.

Over supper she retailed the events of the weeks since I had been on leave. She had heard nothing of Harry, apart from a neighbour seeing him in the bar, until a short time before he died when the barman Ted Cuthbert came to see her. He told her that Harry was very ill, the doctor had been called and had spoken to Hilda, Harry's mistress, who had decamped the same afternoon, carrying two large suitcases. The housekeeper, an elderly lady, was looking after Harry as best she could. He thought Kitty should go to the Railway to see to Harry and take charge. She returned to the hotel that afternoon and went straight to Harry's bedroom, as soon as she saw him she knew that he was dying. She stayed with him through the night. The doctor called in the morning, gave him a cursory examination and an injection and told Kitty that he had cancer of the bronchus and wouldn't last the day. In fact he lingered through another night and died the following morning.

For the next nineteen days (my leave was extended on the order of the Chief Constable, who had authorised it in the first place, the last favour he could do for Harry) I ran the Railway Hotel, in a manner of speaking anyway. In fact the staff ran the place while I hovered about ineffectually. To my disappointment there were no pretty young barmaids, just Ted and two middle-aged ladies, Ann and Olga. They must have robbed the place blind but I didn't care. I just wanted to get through it all and return to Padova and the delights of the Via Roma. The Railway shared one feature with the bars on that street. I noticed two ladies in the Smoking Room one day, one blonde, the other henna-red. Both were heavily made up and displaying more of their legs than was customary at the time. I asked Ted who they were and he went out of the bar to have a look. "They're friends of Hilda's", he said, "They're on the game". I brightened up, perhaps things weren't so bad after all. They weren't up to Padova standards but were a lot more attractive than Ann or Olga. He shook his head, "I wouldn't touch either of them. I know one or two that have and regretted it". He winked, leaving me in no doubt what he meant. I left the two ladies alone; after worrying about VD for months in Italy I hadn't come all the way home to catch a dose. God knew where the nearest ET Centre was, Catterick probably.

At that time there was a shortage of beer and most pubs closed for a day or two each week so I managed to enjoy some relaxation. Jack was home, working for his father on the docks until he decided what he wanted to do, and Ken arrived during the second week on one of his frequent leaves from the RAF. Frank Bradley's wife, Amy, was living at Sea View Cottage and came to help sort through Harry's desk. I asked her how Monica was and she told me she was living in Cardiff. She gave me a significant look. "She liked you, you know, she often asks after you". I let it go; if she had been in Grimsby it would

have been different. I was sorry that she was so far away.

We finally cleared the desk, finding all sorts of interesting odds and ends, a lot of which I gave to Amy, keeping a ten dollar bill for myself. We didn't find a will, which meant that Kitty's declaration "It's all ours!" was true. Harry's estate would be divided into three; a third each for Kitty and me and a third to be put into a widow's trust fund which would be invested to produce an income which Kitty could draw, on her death it would pass to me. This had been explained to us by the manager of the Yorkshire Penny Bank, Mr. H. Stringer, when we asked him to arrange for the bank to act as executors of the estate.

If ever I had an ambition to run a public house those days at the Railway put me off for life, not only the long hours and drudgery of heaving cases of bottles about (Ted did the clever stuff like changing barrels and washing out pipes) but the sheer difficulty of trying to be civil, even friendly to people getting steadily drunker while I was cold sober myself. There were one or two respectable regular customers who went out of their way to speak well of Harry. One of these, a garage proprietor, was the only one I had any time for. He had been in the Army in Italy in WW1 and knew Padova. We had several conversations and he told me something of Hilda's running of the Railway during the last months of Harry's life. She and her relatives had run the place to suit themselves and their behaviour had driven a lot of regulars away. While Harry was in hospital she had allowed Pat and Sis (the two prostitutes I had noticed) to take clients upstairs, a sure way for Harry to lose his licence and be heavily fined. I told him I wanted to leave the Army as soon as I could and he told me to come and see him when I was demobbed as he might have a job for me.

One duty of my temporary occupation, of course, was to bank the previous day's takings. Kitty had warned me not to pay in too much because of the income tax. I looked through the paying-in book and found that the average was about £20 per day, equivalent to about £400 today. After a few days it was obvious that this was about half the actual takings which varied between £40-£50 per day. I decided that this was risky as well as discreditable and increased the proportion to three quarters, giving Kitty the excess. I don't know whether this shows me to have ^{been} honest or stupid. I would have done better to have pocketed the extra money and sold it on the black market in Padova where an English £1 note was worth a lot more than 2200 lire. It would have paid for a lot of pleasant evenings on the Via Roma, as it was the tax inspector got it in the end anyway.

Towards the end of my time at the Railway Ted came to see me in the office, closing the door behind him. He said something had been worrying him and he felt he should tell me about it before it was too late. Not long before

he died Harry had told him to go to Fannystone Road and ask Kitty to come to the Railway and see to things. I expressed surprise at this since they hadn't spoken for almost three years and Kitty hadn't been near the Railway in that time. "There was nothing else he could do", Ted replied, "he knew he was very poorly, your mam was the only one he could turn to, he'd told Hilda to clear off and she did when she was ready, he never trusted her and never let her have the keys to the office or the safe, he hid them both and she didn't find them. When your mam got here he told her where they were and made her find them and show him she'd got them. Hilda took two big cases when she left and her brother took a big box full of stuff, he came back for more but I wouldn't let him in. What I wanted to tell you, though, was that your dad had a lot of money he never paid into the bank. I think it's hidden somewhere here.

Bert, Amy, Ted and I combed the place but never found anything. On my last day at home, however, Kitty showed me some of the interesting things she had found in Harry's desk and safe during the day he died. There was a gold cigarette case, a gold pocket watch and chain, three wristwatches and several rings, one of them even I could tell was a very good one, a white sapphire in an oval fitting surrounded by diamonds. She then sheepishly produced a ~~small~~ brown carrier bag crammed full with banknotes—mainly £1 but also a number of the old white fivers. She emptied it out onto the table and we counted it between us—over £1500—equivalent to about £30,000 in to-day's money. It kept Kitty going for years. I am certain that it was the large sum of money Harry was supposed to have hidden away; at least it ended up in the right hands and the tax man didn't get a cent of it.

For the first and only time I was happy to go back to the Army. The whole of the Railway episode seemed like a bad dream and I was glad to see the back of the place when it was finally handed over to the new landlord. Considering my drinking in Cortina and Padova it is remarkable that I didn't touch a drop even when offered drinks by customers. I could have drunk myself stupid every night if I'd wanted to and probably screwed myself rotten as well if Ted hadn't warned me against Pat and Sis and the two barmaids had been a bit younger. As it was they both kissed me when I paid them off with an unexpected bonus, Olga, the more attractive one, almost pushing her tongue down my throat and giving me her telephone number. The Railway was pulled down in the Seventies (?), the site is a used car lot now.

Kitty took me to see Harry's grave in Scarthoe Road cemetery, a desolate place at the best of times but made worse by the leaden sky, icy wind and odd patches of dirty snow of the tail end of the Winter of 1947. I stood to attention and saluted. It seemed to be the thing to do.

I arrived back at 112 a day late, having been detailed by the RTO at Padova station to act as escort to a prisoner on his way to the detention barracks at Lonigo, about 40 miles away by road. I spent the night in the staff quarters and was very glad to get out of the place in the morning. The driver who took me back to Padova said that the staff were just as much prisoners as the inmates and I believed him. I am happy to say that that was as near to a detention barracks as I ever got. The premises at Padova were almost deserted as Company HQ had moved to Mogliano, a village about 30 miles away on the road to Treviso, leaving a small detachment in Via Galileo Galilei. The new HQ was a large villa, set in its own grounds, I have an idea that it had been a showplace in pre-war days and may be one again now. I only spent a couple of days there, the only incident I can remember was being issued with two pairs of pyjamas and four sheets—part of the upgrading of Army conditions ordered by Field Marshal Montgomery, who had become Chief of the Imperial General Staff the previous year: we had become known as "Monty's Army". On 5th April I was posted to the Ports Detachment in Venice.

I arrived at Piazzale Roma at the end of the Autostrada where a motor boat was waiting to take me to the detachment's billet in Pensione Seguso. My introduction to Venice was a slow ride along the Grand Canal, under the Rialto Bridge, past Santa Maria della Salute where we turned into a much wider waterway along which a large cargo ship was sailing then, after a few hundred yards into a narrow side canal where we stopped at a set of landing steps outside my new billet.

Pensione Seguso was situated on the corner of the Zattere ai Gesuati and the Rio San Vio canal, facing the Giudecca canal. It was next door to Pensione Calcina which had a plaque on the wall to commemorate John Ruskin's residence there during 1845; both buildings were painted, appropriately, Venetian red. We occupied two floors of the four storey building, the remainder still being in business as a pensione. One of the first things I did was to buy a camera with Harry's ten dollar bill for over twice its face value. It was the fourth one I had owned in Italy and the first not to be stolen within a few weeks of being purchased. It was a Ferrania 35mm and was very basic. I soon got the hang of it and took a lot of pictures of Venice. Considering that I knew next to nothing about photography I am surprised at the standard I achieved.

As its name indicated, the duties of the Ports Detachment were devoted to the docks. At that time Venice was one of the main ports for the import of UN relief supplies to Italy and Southern Europe generally; there was also a lot of military traffic, British units moving to the Middle East and German POW's coming home. The place was a hive of black market activity and our main duties were to patrol the harbour in the detachment's motor boat, driven by a local pilot, to mount guard over Allied and UN ships and the back entrance to the docks at no. 31 Berth, a short walk along the Zattere from Pensione Seguso. The members of the detachment were vulnerable to bribes offered by some of the racketeers, usually to turn their backs or not look in a certain direction at a certain time, and I regret to say that some of my comrades accepted the money. I never did, not because of any moral scruples but because I never got chance—none was ever offered me.

The detachment was, unusually, commanded by an officer—Lieut. Burros, an Anglo Indian, who played little part in the detachment's activities except to spend a couple of hours in his office most days of the week. At that time there was only one officer actually wearing the Military Police badge—the Adjutant at the Depot; all the other officers in the Corps had been seconded, usually from infantry, artillery or cavalry regiments. This meant that secondment to the Provost Branch was a good way for a CO to get rid of officers who, for one reason or another, he felt his battalion or regiment would be better without and accounted for their generally poor quality. Even the good officers, and there were some, usually had a problem with drink, sex or, as in Lieut. Burros' case, racial background.

Like the rest of 112 Provost Company discipline was easy-going, as long as the duties were carried out and our turn out was reasonably presentable we were left alone. Cleaning was done by two local women—Gemma and Cesira—both in their late twenties (mature by Italian standards) and both spoken for. Gemma belonged to Sergeant Tofts, grey haired and wearing WW1 ribbons and Cesira to Lieut. Burros. Gemma often slept with Tofts and Cesira started cleaning Lieut. Burros' office shortly after he arrived, emerging shortly before he left, the door staying firmly closed during this time. Sgt. Tofts was demobbed not long after I joined the detachment and was replaced by Sgt. Bramham who came from Scun-

thorpe and had lodged in Grimsby while working as a labourer on the building of airfields in the vicinity in the early days of the war. He liked chatting about Grimsby and North Lincs. and we became friends. He inherited Gemma from Tofts, presumably she went with the territory. I made several other friends—Len Cooke from Manchester, Ken Thompson from Leeds, Taffy Edwards from Llanelli, Eric Hudson from Sunderland and Paddy Smith from Larne in Northern Ireland. I look back on the four months I spent in Venice as my best time in the Army for several reasons. The duties were generally interesting, we were often accompanied by members of the Carabinieri or Questura, which greatly improved my demotic Italian and I enjoyed visiting the various ships we dealt with. The members of the detachment got on well together, treating the oddballs (eg me) with good natured tolerance, and we were lucky in not having a thief, bully or unpleasant drunk (usually Welsh or Scottish) to spoil things. I made a niche for myself as detachment intellectual as I had done at Blackdown. I liked living in such beautiful surroundings and began to develop an interest in architecture. I made love to a number of Italian girls.

We got a few treats from the crews of the ships, sometimes a hot meal in the officers' dining room, the odd pack of cigarettes or glass of whisky, cups of sweet, milky tea in the galley. I was given my one and only joint (called a reefer in those days) one night by the Lascar cook of a British Liberty ship. Two or three of his countrymen were present including one who had been brought specially for me to see. He was a Somali and the blackest man I have ever seen, not only black but matt black, the others were quite proud of him. All were puffing on large, yellow, hand-rolled cigarettes which smelled like Italian Nazionales. The cook rolled one for me, saying it would make me happy. I guessed what it was, such things were known about in England but rarely seen. I lit it and took a few drags, holding it in my lungs as long as I could, as the cook instructed me. At first nothing happened, then suddenly I broke into a cold sweat, felt dizzy and ran to the ship side just in time to be violently sick over the rail. The Lascars helped me back to the galley to recover, saying it must have been too strong. I have never been tempted by ganja or any other drug since.

The Orderly Corporal duty wasn't popular as the late and night turns of duty made a mess of one's social life. As usual there wasn't much to do beyond answering the phone, keeping the log and typing the following day's duty roster but one had to stay in or near the office. One night, to pass the time, I started typing a short story which, after a few paragraphs, turned into soft core pornography involving an attractive middle-aged lady who had worked in the YMCA billet at Salisbury. It was, of course completely imaginary. By morning I had typed several foolscap sheets and was quite pleased with my work. Before I had chance to put it away Sgt Bramham and Cpl. Joe Hardacre appeared in the doorway. "What's this?" asked Bramham, taking the papers from my hand. He began reading, Hardacre trying to peer over his shoulder. He finished the first sheet which Hardacre took from him; both sat down, reading intently, Hardacre taking each page as Bramham finished it. At length they had both read it through, I could see that both the NCO's had massive erections, something impossible to hide when wearing KD shorts. "Did you make that up yourself?" Bramham asked, I said that I had and asked if I could have it back. Hardacre passed it over to me, "Don't throw it away whatever you do", he said. They both left the office having forgotten what they had come in for in the first place, I wondered if Gemma might be in for an interesting morning. I passed the story to Len Cooke and went to bed. When I got up in the late afternoon Sgt Bramham was waiting; "Have you got that story?" he asked, I told him I had passed it on, such writings were very popular and passed from hand to hand, God knew who had it by that time. His face fell, "Will you type it again?", I had no option but to agree. He described one or two variations he would like to see and told me to use carbon paper so he could have a copy for himself. For the rest of my time in Venice I was regularly on Orderly Corporal, if I had wanted I could have been on it permanently. I typed a large number of pornographic stories, carefully tailored to suit Sgt. Bramham's erotic tastes which weren't very different from mine, or the rest of the detachment's for that matter. I managed to get four clear copies with carbon paper, if Xerox machines had been invented I should have had to do fourteen, one for each of us. Several Grimsby schoolteachers, barmaids and other ladies would have been surprised to learn that they figured prominently in the fantasies of a number of military policemen, Miss Margaret Waugh particularly.

As in Padova, I enjoyed walking about the city, finding my way through its narrow streets and alleyways, gradually learning to appreciate its magnificent architecture and townscapes although I never entered a single church, gallery or museum. I did go to the opera once at the Teatro La Fenice. I admired the interior with its tier upon tier of gilded boxes. I saw "Tosca" but didn't enjoy it and never went again. A big feature of Venice in those days was the smell. Unlike Grimsby, which had a variety of smells, Venice had only one—raw sewage. It varied in intensity depending on where you were. There was no more than a faint, almost piquant, aroma at our billet which faced the Giudecca canal, wide enough for two ships to pass, the Grand Canal stank but in the area between San Marco and the Rialto there were narrow side and back canals which had a stench you could almost feel between finger and thumb.

I was less solitary in Venice than I had been in Padova, being in more congenial company, and generally spent my evenings out in the company of friends, eating and drinking in the bars and cafes and going to the AKC cinema just off San Marco. About once a week, however I went out on my own. I had soon established that Venice, like every other Italian city at that time, had bars and cafes patronised by prostitutes, much the same as Padova; there was a difference, however. Italy had a very high rate of unemployment, particularly in the centre and south, where the heavy fighting had been. Venice had been declared an open city, respected by both sides, and was untouched by the war, consequently large numbers of people had moved there and stayed on when the war finished. The Allied Armies were a major source of employment in more ways than one; girls who in normal times would have worked in offices, shops and factories, unable to find jobs, made a living by becoming prostitutes, restricting their services to the British or American soldiers who were less likely to be infected than civilians or merchant seamen. They never mixed with the hardened professional whores, one of whom I recognised from Padova one evening and ended up in bed with. She told me that the "bambine puttane" (baby whores) were spoiling things for her and her friends who looked down on them and would have nothing to do with them. She warned me to stay with the ladies like her who knew how to look after themselves and how to please men.

I could see the sense of this but, soon after, found myself in a bar frequented by the "bambine", most of whom were very attractive. I soon picked one up and we went off to a nearby room. Everything was much the same as it would have been with the professionals—even the price, still 1500 lire. The main difference, of course, was that the girls weren't whores in any real sense of the word, they were exactly the sort of girls I might have met in a dance hall in England and walked home with in the hope of a few kisses and, with luck, a quick grope on the way, certainly nothing further until the relationship had progressed a long way towards marriage. I enjoyed the encounter and repeated it pretty well every week while I was in Venice. The girls were uniformly charming and treated us as they would have treated a boy friend at home, without the inhibitions imposed by respectability. It has always seemed to me to be a very pleasant way to spend an evening, meeting a pretty girl in agreeable surroundings knowing what the outcome would be, then spending half an hour or so with her in a clean, comfortable bedroom for an affordable fee. I may be morally dead but I think that the incidence of rape, indecent assault and a major cause of male unhappiness in England would have been much reduced if we could have accepted controlled prostitution. It probably doesn't suit the English character, however, too easy and guilt-free. We like such things to be either forbidden or compulsory. My Padova lady friend was right in one respect, however, the professionals always did a good strip tease, wearing high heels, stockings and interesting, often silk, underwear. The bambine were always bare-legged and wore a white bra and rayon briefs, usually white, blue or pink. It was a minor disappointment.

I went out with Taffy Edwards one evening and, I can't remember how, we met two girls, one English the other Danish, who were on holiday from their jobs with the US Army in Germany. The English girl, who came from Liverpool, soon attached herself to Taffy leaving Lizzie, the Danish girl, to me. She was a typical Nordic type, fair-haired, blue eyed, a voluptuous figure, beautiful. She spoke immaculate English with a slight American accent. She was, however cool and distant and I never felt I was getting close to her even when we were kissing; it was a bit like kissing a beautiful, lifelike waxwork. I thought perhaps she just didn't like me but we went out several times even after Taffy and the

English girl went off on their own (they got on like a house afire until she found out he was married) and she could easily have found more congenial male company if she had wanted. I wrote to her after she went back to Germany but she never replied. On her last evening in Venice I saw her back to her hotel, well after the midnight curfew which was generally ignored. Walking back to Seguso I ran into a foot patrol of the Town detachment, also belonging to 112 Provost Company, who put me on a charge in the comradely spirit for which the Royal Military Police is well known. Sgt. Bramham tried to get me off without success and Lieut. Burros gave me a severe reprimand which was equivalent to several days CB but had no actual effect beyond reducing the testimonial in my Army Discharge Book from "Exemplary" to "Very Good". I have gone through life with a document proclaiming me to be less than perfect. Not that anybody has ever looked at it.

One other incident has stayed in my mind. An ENSA concert party visited Venice to entertain the troops at the AKC Cinema. The star of the show was Kay Kendall who later became a film star and appeared in the film "Genevieve" which has become a classic. She married the actor Rex Harrison and died tragically young of leukaemia. For some reason the show was very popular, admission being by ticket only. Somebody in the detachment had two tickets and was unexpectedly posted back to HQ at Mestre. Eric Hudson and I bought the tickets, more out of curiosity than anything else. Two items stood out from a pretty standard show. Kay Kendall sang "Do It Again" in the sort of little girl voice that Marilyn Monroe later used for the same song. She was wearing a long, black evening dress, bare shouldered except for narrow shoulder-straps. As she sang one of the straps kept slipping off and she slowly drew it back. She revealed absolutely nothing but it was more erotic than if she had taken her clothes off item by item and stood triumphantly naked. The high spot of the show was the Swedish singer Lale Anderson who was famous for being the girl who made the record of "Lilli Marlene", which was broadcast to the Afrika Korps in the desert and picked up by the 8th Army who adopted it for themselves. She sang a couple of current numbers and then the stage lights were switched off except for a single spotlight and she sang "Lilli Marlene". I have never forgotten the beautiful girl in a white evening dress singing that haunting song, first in English and then in German.

There is nothing more sentimental than an audience of soldiers. When she finished there wasn't a dry eye in the house: strong men wept. A large number had been in the desert with the 8th Army, the leaping gazelle flash we wore had been worn by the 13th Corps. She had to give three encores before they let her go. Even cynics like me who had been nowhere near the desert and had never heard a shot fired in anger were touched.

The detachment was closed down on 8th August and we moved to Company HQ at Mestre, on the mainland across the causeway. My notebook records that I was sick from 31st July to 6th August but for the life of me I can't remember what was wrong. I have a vague memory of having a sore throat, it must have been that.

I spent a week at Mestre in the office block which had been requisitioned for our HQ and was posted on 17th August to "D" Provost Company at Udine, about 50 miles away to the North East. I never learned why this company had a letter rather than a number, the book "Redcap" makes no mention of it, not surprising as it doesn't mention 112 or any other CMF Provost Company either.

I only spent a couple of days at Udine, which seemed to be a typical Italian city, something like a smaller version of Padova, with narrow, arcaded streets. The RSM of "D" Company was the only man I encountered in the Army whose homosexuality was generally known and accepted. He was very fat and allowed to wear slacks rather than shorts; even the Army had that much sense of the ridiculous. He left the members of his own unit alone and spent his social life with others of the same persuasion in the city, Italians being much more tolerant of such things than the English, at that time anyway. On 19th August I was posted to the Grado detachment.

Grado is a small seaside resort off the coast of the Gulf of Trieste, about 30 miles South of Udine. Like Venice it was joined to the mainland by a causeway and was a leave centre for Allied troops. The billet was a small villa near the beach and I spent a very pleasant month there. The duties were light and the discipline easy-going. We were commanded by Joe Hardacre, now a sergeant, who I had known in Venice. He showed me a large manilla envelope containing a number of the stories I had written in Pensione Seguso and asked if I fancied writing any more. To encourage me he put me on Orderly Corporal that night and I typed another erotic story for him, he read it intently before

putting it carefully in his envelope.

I was able to spend a lot of time on the beach in the hot sunshine (I can't remember it raining the whole of the time I was in Venice and Grado) and, for the only time in my life, acquired an all-over tan. I renewed acquaintance with Harry Pexman, who I had last seen at Longarone, and one or two others from Padova. One day I was on duty on the checkpoint at Belvedere, at the end of the causeway with some Americans from the 88th Division. I fell into conversation with one of them, a tall, thin PFC from Rhode Island, and we became friends. His name was Jim Owens.

The weeks at Grado passed uneventfully, they were something like a watered-down version of the months in Venice. We didn't have to clear the bars at midnight so there were no free drinks and I stayed relatively sober, which is more than I can say for Jim Owens whose capacity amazed me. I have watched him drink two tumblers full of gin straight off and walk out of the bar in good order, giving no sign that he had just drunk over half a bottle of neat spirits. I enjoyed talking to him, we had a lot in common and came from similar backgrounds. Somehow he acquired a girl friend and suggested that I should find one so we could go about as a foursome. Apart from the Danish girl, Lizzie, the only girls I had known in Italy were prostitutes and Grado was no exception. I had encountered a German lady who turned the occasional trick very discreetly in a secluded little park behind the beach and asked her to go to the cinema one evening. She seemed flattered and pleased by the invitation and the four of us spent a pleasant evening at the cinema followed by supper in a restaurant for which Jim paid (he got \$96 a month, more than twice as much as I did). The German lady was thirtyish, older than we were, but was very attractive, well-dressed and spoke fluent English and Italian. I took her home and was rewarded for the evening by being invited up to her room. I still had to pay, though.

I left Grado on 19th September to go on leave. The Medloc train from Villach had greatly improved, we were four to a compartment and the luggage racks had been converted into bunks. The route had been changed as well, instead of Calais we now travelled to the Hook of Holland and from there to Harwich. At Villach I met Stewart Burgon who had been at Otley with Ken Francis and me. He was now in the Royal Signals and we travelled together, passing the time pleasantly. I was interested to pass

through Holland and shocked by the devastation of Rotterdam which had been heavily bombed by the Germans in 1940. The city centre was completely flat except for great heaps of rubble and a number of workers who were starting on its rebuilding.

Kitty, Gran and Evelynne were pleased to see me. Harry's estate had not been settled but Kitty's carrier bag full of banknotes had made their lives a lot easier. She and Evelynne were still working at the Brighowgate Homes and she had bought a car—a 1932 steel-bodied Austin 7. The motor trade had recovered from the war and was making a lot of money from the desire of ex-servicemen to spend their gratuities on a car—any car. New cars were starting to come on to the market but were effectively rationed, the majority of them going for export. This situation lasted for several years into the fifties and is at the root of the decline of the British motor industry. They were such awful cars that we would have done better to keep them in this country instead of exporting old-fashioned, under-powered, poorly designed cars to countries for which they were unsuited. They gave this country's motor industry a bad reputation from which it has never really recovered, all its major, mass-production factories now being owned by American, German, French and Japanese firms, leaving us to make the Rolls Royces and racing cars that we are good at.

Kitty had paid £120 for the Austin 7 which might have fetched £40-£50 in 1939. It was a fair price, however, as 1939 cars which cost £150-£200 new were selling for £450-£500 in 1947 (in present day terms this is about £3000-£4000 and £9000-£10,000). I had done odd bits of driving in Italy on jeeps and utilities and was eager to have a go. I now had a full licence as it had been decided that the backlog of driving tests was so great that anyone who had held a provisional licence for a year between 1939-47 could have a full licence for the asking and 5/- fee. Kitty had sorted this out for me while I was in Venice. She gave me the ignition key, we got in and I started the engine which stalled as soon as I put it in gear and let in the clutch. The gearbox was the wrong way round like the Jowett van which had indirectly propelled me into the Army. I soon got the hang of it, however, and drove round the block to Kitty's satisfaction. It wasn't a bad little car, reliable and light on petrol, which was strictly rationed. Apart from the car

I remember little about this leave. I think Ken came home on one of his frequent week ends from the RAF but I can't remember Jack at all.

I reported back to 112 Provost Company HQ at Mestre on 19th October and resumed the dreary round of pointless duties. Mestre is a small, dormitory town with little to recommend it beyond a few bars and cafes in the central piazza. It has since been incorporated as part of Venice. Taffy Edwards and I took the trolleybus across the causeway to Piazzale Roma one evening and the vaporetto to San Marco, which was deserted. It was cold and raining, I wondered what the girls were doing now that the soldiers had gone. Something else was missing, for a while I couldn't think what it was then it struck me: there was hardly any smell.

In mid-November it was announced that the company was to be disbanded and the Army was pulling out of Italy, leaving a joint garrison with the Americans in Trieste. We were going to the BAOR Depot at Paderborn in Central Germany except for one or two who would go to 227 Provost Company in Trieste. This news went down like a lead balloon. The RSM at Paderborn was "Shiner" Wright, whose name was enough to frighten everyone from the rank of sergeant down. He was known as an absolute bastard throughout a corps that was a byword for them. Even the remote possibility of going to 227 wasn't much better as that company had the reputation of being much more regimental than 112. Each room had a coconut mat, the webbing binding at each end of which had to be blanched white every Friday night ready for the Saturday morning inspection. This was considered a classic piece of bullshit even by the connoisseurs. On 14th November a farewell dinner and dance was held. I have the programme in front of me as I write with a large number of signatures scrawled over it, some I remember very well, most not at all. It includes the names of the Italian cleaning girls who had been co-opted as waitresses; one of them was Cesira ("Cesi") who had been Lieut. Burros' girl friend in Venice. She wrote "con simpatia", which is used to express affection rather than sympathy. I wished I had known this sooner, she was very pretty and Burros was long gone.

The RSM "Chalky" White made a speech, saying all the usual things, and announced that the sergeants' mess barman, Sam Weller, was going to 227. This was received with cheering as Weller was

considered to have the easiest job in the company. On the Monday I was called to the Orderly Room to be told that I also had been posted to Trieste. The following day I said goodbye to the few friends I had at Mestre and travelled to 227 Provost Company in the back of a 15cwt truck. Sam Weller sat in front with the driver, cushy to the last.

Trieste was in dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia. Before 1919 the Istrian Peninsula, including the cities of Pola, Fiume and Trieste had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Trieste had been its principal seaport. The Italians annexed the peninsula in 1919 and were finally allowed to keep it by the Treaty of Rapallo in 1920. At the end of WW2 in May, 1945, it was occupied by the Yugoslav Partisans until they were ordered out of Trieste by the General commanding the 1st New Zealand Division who gave them 48 hours to evacuate the city, backing his order up by moving an armoured brigade up to the front line and getting several squadrons of Allied bombers to fly over the area for a while. The Yugoslavs gave way to force majeure and the New Zealanders occupied Trieste. In early 1947 Italy ceded Istria to Yugoslavia with the exception of Trieste and its surrounding hinterland which became a free city with a United Nations garrison comprising the British 24th Infantry Brigade and the American 351st Infantry Regiment.

227 Provost Company was a very different organisation to poor old 112, which had been a complete ragtime outfit. It was certainly a lot more regimental but in an acceptable way. The story about the edges of the mats was true but, to anyone who had served in the 29th Training Battalion, as I had, this was a minor aberration outweighed by comfortable quarters in part of the University on Piazza Oberdan in the centre of the city and being treated as sensible individuals expected to carry out useful duties in a professional way. My first duty was to help to line the pavement in Piazza Unita to hold back the crowds watching the march past of the 24th Infantry Brigade in honour of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip on 20th November. As might be expected this event was the subject of ribaldry among the soldiers. All the old honeymoon jokes were trotted out with Elizabeth and Philip as the participants, a typical example was - Q. Why can't Elizabeth get her shoes on? A. Because Philip's got the horn.

I soon settled in and all went well until 4th December, a Thursday, when I was on guard duty on the main gate from 1600-

2000. About 1900 a civilian came up to me and said, in Italian, that he had come for the truck to collect the band for that evening's dance. Now, what I should have done was to ring the bell in the main building to bring the Orderly Corporal to the gate and if the bell had worked I am sure I should have done so: it didn't work, however and, since I knew the Company dance was on Saturday evening I told the man that he had come on the wrong day and sent him away. What I didn't know was that a dance had been arranged in the Sergeants' mess for that evening. It was not a success as the band didn't turn up. The following day I was the centre of attention and the butt of several jokes; for some time I went under the name of Glenn Miller. I felt as if I were a character in a Bateman cartoon - "The Man Who Turned the Band Away for the Sergeants' Mess Dance". The RSM called me to his office. He didn't see the funny side of it at all and asked for an explanation which I gave as truthfully as I could, implying strongly that I hadn't been able to understand what the man said. This made things worse, of course, as there was all the more reason for me to have sought assistance from somebody better informed than I was (a difficult thing for me to admit). The RSM realised that he couldn't actually charge me with anything, the bell to the Orderly Corporal was notoriously faulty and should have been repaired and I should have been told about the Sergeants' mess dance. I was, however, guilty of thinking that I knew best and being proved wrong by my superiors who had more than one way of emphasizing their authority. The RSM dismissed me and nothing further happened until Christmas Eve when I was put on guard at the main gate from 1200-1600 and 2359-0400 (there was a dance) and on Christmas Day (I ate a cold Christmas Dinner standing up in the kitchen) and Boxing Day and the 27th, 28th and 29th December (another dance).

Despite this misadventure, which was entirely my own fault, I liked being in 227, easily the best unit I served in. I made several friends and easily coped with the increased discipline. Trieste is a large city but has little in the way of architecture or atmosphere. The population was mainly Italian but the city always seemed more Middle European than Italian. It had the usual bars, cafes and restaurants and there were two Allied cinemas, one British and one American, which was the more popular as it showed Hollywood films before they were shown in England. One

evening in a bar in the Via Roma (all Italian cities seem to have a Via Roma, usually running through the red light district), I met the German lady I had patronised in Grado. She was pleased to see me and we resumed our relationship. I took her to the cinema once or twice and even invited her to one of the company dances. The following morning Paddy Cullinane, the Vice Squad corporal, took me to one side and told me not to invite her again. I didn't argue. Soon afterwards she decided to go back to Germany as her fiancé had returned home from a British POW camp. On her last evening in Trieste I took her out for a meal and we went back to her room. She was very affectionate and I got the impression that if I said the right things she would have been happy to stay. I didn't say them. Even so I didn't have to pay.

I started a new notebook at the beginning of 1948 which has been lost so I have no accurate record of the rest of my time in Trieste and have to be vague about dates from now on. Some time in early January I was on duty at the check post on the border with Italy at Duino, jointly with the Americans. Their duties changed at different times from ours, the man I had been chatting to took his leave and went into their hut to be replaced by a familiar figure, that of Jim Owens. From then until I left Trieste I saw a good deal of Jim, who was stationed at Opicina in the hills behind the city, served by its own line of dark blue trams.

Some time in January those in demob groups 68, 69 and 70 were invited to apply to attend courses at the College of the Rhine Army at Gottingen in Germany. These were intended to prepare us for civilian life and were mainly devoted to manual skills such as bricklaying, carpentry and car mechanics but there were also more academic courses available for those intending to resume their education. Strictly speaking I didn't qualify as I was a regular and had over four years still to serve. I was, however, in 68 group, it said so in my paybook and when I asked the Orderly Room Sergeant, Frank Rowley, about it he looked at the instructions covering the courses and pointed out that they didn't say anything about actual demob, only what group you had to be in; there was nothing to stop me. I applied successfully for the courses in Government and Politics, English and Musical Appreciation and, in early February, set off for four weeks in Gottingen.

I was interested to see what things were really like in Germany. All sorts of stories were popular in the Army. There were no prostitutes because all the girls were on the game, not for money but for cigarettes, soap, coffee and chocolate. Cigarettes had become the currency, you never saw German money at all. Private soldiers had made fortunes on the black market and there were several stories illustrating this. My favourite was the corporal who learned from his German girl friend that nutmeg, which was a popular spice and widely used in German cuisine, had been unobtainable in Germany for years. He went home on leave and bought all the nutmegs he could find, taking several pounds back off leave. which his girl friend carefully bartered on the black market for jewellery, watches and cameras, ending up with property worth hundreds of pounds in England. It might even have been true.

I saw one thing that brought home to me the reality of life in Germany on the way to Gottingen. The train stopped in what was left of Cologne station. It was 7-30 in the morning and the platforms were crowded with people going to work. Through the gaps in the fabric (there was no roof) it was possible to see the city. The place was completely flat except for the Cathedral which stood out black against the prevailing grey of the rubble and the leaden February sky. The whole scene—the people, the remnants of the station, the desert which had been a great city, was in monochrome. It was very depressing, even for one who had cheered the bombers with the best of them. I didn't take a picture—it wouldn't have come out.

Gottingen has one of Germany's main universities. The town is quite close to the border with East Germany, at that time the Russian Zone, not far from the equally historic cities of Hamelin, Hanover, Brunswick and Kassel, all of which had been heavily bombed in the war. Considering its proximity to industrial targets it is a wonder that Gottingen was never touched. It was the home of the Grimm brothers and there is a statue of the Little Goose Girl in the Market Place. We were billeted in a large barracks on the outskirts of the town. It was a classic example of the German Army's provision for its soldiers, far better than anything the British Army had at the time. The centrally heated barrack rooms held six of us and I was lucky in my room mates, all of whom were on the academic course like me. I remember them all clearly; as so often happens in the Army

it was as if we had known each other all our lives. I became particularly friendly with Frank Naughton, a private in the Gordons. He came from Aberdeen and had worked in the offices of a fish merchant there with connections in Grimsby. There were two other Scots, one, George Anderson, was in the RASC but had been in the 29th Training Battalion a few months before me. The other was Alec McAlpine from Edinburgh, where he had attended the Royal High School. He was in the Camerons and, like me, was a waste of space in the infantry. He was highly intelligent but had a diffident, nervous manner guaranteed to make him the butt of every drill sergeant's sarcasm. He was living for the day when he could leave the Army and start at Edinburgh University. He had, however, an unexpected side to his character which didn't become apparent until almost the end of our acquaintance. Tom Lewis, in the RAMC, came from Camberwell and was taking the Art course. He was fond of telling us interesting stories about his experiences as a medical orderly, dwelling particularly on a certain aspect. After one blood-curdling tale I nervously asked him whether syphilis could pass through a contraceptive. "Go through a French letter?", he cried, "it'll go through a Wellington boot".. The last was Gordon Rizegarri, also from London, who was extremely clever but had an unfortunate way of speaking which made him sound like the popular idea of a homosexual, even though he wasn't one. He was tall and thin and showed nothing of his Italian ancestry. Private Pike in "Dad's Army" reminds me of him.

The courses were devised to make the most of the four weeks. The best one I took was Government and Politics, dealing with the constitutions and systems of government in Britain, the United States and Soviet Russia. Although I was interested in politics, like most people I had only the vaguest idea of how Parliament and Congress actually worked. I benefitted greatly from the lucid lectures of our instructor, Captain John Mendelson, who had been a lecturer at Cambridge and became the Labour MP for Penistone in 1950. He dealt at length with the British and American systems but left the Supreme Soviet until last and I remember nothing about it. English and Musical Appreciation were interesting and entertaining but I didn't feel I learnt much from either of them.

The second evening Frank and I set off to explore Gottingen

and see what it had to offer in the way of entertainment. I was eager to find out whether the stories about Germany were true. Frank's battalion was stationed near Essen and he soon assured me of one point-plenty of girls were available as long as you were careful. The VD rate in the Ruhr was very high and his CO had taken steps to eradicate it from his battalion. Anyone becoming infected (irrespective of whether he had followed the correct procedures) was treated like a pariah, having to eat his meals at a segregated table and use segregated ablutions. They also did special duties in the evenings under the direction of the Regimental Police. I told Frank how things were done in Italy, where the Army had finally recognised the fact that single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints and made it as easy as possible to take precautions against infection and to prove that you had done so. I thought that to catch such a disease and have to undergo the primitive treatment then in use was bad enough for most people: the hard cases would do it anyway. I told him about Syph Smith and imitated his dance step.

It was too dark to explore the town so we went to the NAAFI Club for a meal, paid for in British Armed Forces Special Vouchers (BAFVS) which were a kind of Monopoly money in notes of sterling currency to the value of 1/-, 2/6, 5/-, 10/- and £1, with plastic "coins" of 1d and ½d. They were only valid in Army establishments and were the only currency I ever saw in Germany. If you wanted to buy anything in the few shops you used cigarettes. We left the NAAFI Club and wandered through the dark streets until we saw two girls walking in front of us. We speeded up and, somehow, without anything being said, they separated and ended up on our arms. They were both blonde and blue eyed. Frank's girl, Ursula, was the prettier and smaller of the two. Mine was big and buxom, a typical Gretchen, her name was Gertrud, shortened to Trudi. We didn't have to consider where to go as they turned down a side street and into the entrance of a tenement building. As we climbed several flights of stairs in pitch darkness a nasty thought began to nag at me-were we going to be attacked and robbed? (the term "mugged" had not yet reached England). Before I could warn Frank or decide how to defend myself the problem was solved by Ursula unlocking and opening the door of her bed sitter, a large room, clean, tidy and well furnished, a bed in one corner, a sofa in another. I was relieved, Germany was turning out quite well after all.

Both the girls spoke some English and Frank's German was quite fluent, he had done it to matric standard at school. I found the smattering I had picked up from Gran and Kitty added to the little I had managed to learn during the first few weeks in the sixth form at school gave me a basis to build on, helped by a pocket dictionary I had stolen from the library of the Convalescent Depot. Trudi told me that neither of them belonged to Gottingen, she came from Bochum and Ursula from Dusseldorf. She lived with her mother in her aunt's house nearby. They had come to the town in 1944 after being bombed out. Her mother had told her not to have anything to do with RAF men as they had destroyed her home and killed her father. She didn't mind her going out with British soldiers however, the British Army, presumably, being considered less blameworthy for Germany's troubles. After a few minutes general conversation Ursula directed operations by switching the light off. She and Frank were sitting on the bed, Trudi and I on the sofa. Things proceeded very nicely up to the point where I took hold of the elastic at the waist of her brief knickers and started to take them off. She grasped my hand, letting go of my rampant penis to do so, and whispered "nein". This was disconcerting to say the least but before I had chance to react she put my hand on to the gusset of her briefs which she drew to one side, allowing my hand to rest on the soft, moist entrance to her vagina. She then whispered something I didn't understand, it sounded like "du rechts". She whispered it more loudly and the penny dropped; I took a Durex from my shirt pocket, she took it from me and rolled it onto my penis, spreading her legs wide apart, allowing me to thrust into her and bring matters to a very satisfactory conclusion.

As we travelled back to the barracks I remarked on the fact that Trudi insisted on keeping her knickers on even though she had been happy to let me screw her. Frank said that Ursula had done the same, German girls usually did. He thought it was because they had to wear clothes long after they were worn out and didn't like revealing their shabby underwear. I could see this but thought it would have been easy for them to take their pants off in the lavatory beforehand. We went out with Trudi and Ursula for the first two weeks at Gottingen and I enjoyed Trudi's favours several more times, usually at Ursula's flat but twice at her house in the bedroom she shared with her sister. She still kept her knickers on but didn't seem to mind my seeing

them, they weren't at all shabby and were much the same as the Italian girls wore, which didn't bear out Frank's theory. I thought about this for some time and then remembered something Jim Owens had told me. He said that English girls were legendary in the American Army. They would let you do whatever you liked as long as you were both standing up: only bad girls did it lying down, for money. Perhaps German girls eased their consciences by allowing you great favours as long as they kept their knickers on: only bad girls took them off.

I followed the accepted conventions by giving Trudi little presents. Among the things Kitty had brought home from the Railway was a large box full of bars of slightly medicated white soap. I had carried several of these around with me but had scarcely used them as the NAAFI ration was adequate and I didn't like the smell. I had brought them to Gottingen for this very purpose and gave them, one by one, to Trudi, who was suitably grateful. She also got my chocolate ration and packets of biscuits from the NAAFI. I also had the forethought to buy a carton of Lucky Strikes from Jim who also sold me a large tin of ground coffee from the PX, he said it would be valuable in Germany. By the time I visited Trudi's house for the second time we had settled in to a steady relationship. I took her to the movies, we went for a long walk arm in arm in the snow one Sunday to see Bismark's Tower (Bismark left the university in disgrace, I have never taken the trouble to find out why) and chattered in a mixture of German and English. As we entered the house Trudi's mother and sister were waiting to greet me. This was an ominous sign—I was being recognised as her official boy-friend, the step before becoming her fiancé. Not what I had in mind at all. I gave her sister a pack of Lucky Strikes and her mother the tin of coffee. It was a great prize as coffee was strictly rationed in Germany (it never was in Britain) and was very expensive on the black market. The old lady's face lit up and then a tear rolled down her cheek. Trudi embraced me, it was the best present I could have given her mother. I was invited into the living room for a cup of coffee, now that they had some, after which Trudi and I melted away into her bedroom. Her mother and sister tactfully staying put.

It shows what a state Germany was in that respectable people allowed their daughters (and wives) to have casual, openly

sexual relationships with Allied soldiers, often in the family home. I suppose the cigarettes, chocolate, soap and coffee made a big difference to their drab lives but it must have been difficult for people like Trudi's mother to accept. Her husband had been a local government official in Bochum and had been killed in a British air raid while on duty as an Air Raid Warden. Ursula's father, still in Dusseldorf, was a schoolteacher. There was, of course, more to it than near-prostitution; marriage to a Tommy or a Yank was a good way out of Germany. America was preferable but even England was a lot better than Germany in 1948. It must also have seemed to Trudi and many girls of her generation that it was their only chance of marriage. Germany had lost three million men in the war, most of them the sort of young men she might have courted and married in better times. I never contemplated marrying Trudi or any other of the girls I knew in Germany or Italy. Immature as I was, I had the sense to realise that marriage is a difficult business at best and to add national or racial differences is asking for trouble. Forty four years of successful marriage have confirmed me in this view.

Not long after my acceptance into the bosom of Trudi's family Frank and I went to Ursula's flat and passed a pleasant hour or so with the girls. For some reason we left earlier than usual and walked to the bus stop in the town center. We had just missed a bus and had to wait twenty minutes for the next. As it drove us slowly through the town we passed the NAAFI Club where a dance was in progress. Walking towards the entrance were two corporals in the Royal Norfolks, their yellow shoulder-titles prominent. Each had a girl on his arm-one was Ursula the other Trudi. I turned to Frank and we both laughed. "Fuck them", I said, "we'll find two more".

We soon picked up other girls. One evening we saw Trudi and Ursula in the town and stopped to chat for a few minutes. They had guessed why we hadn't returned. I asked where their corporals were, Trudi made a gesture and said "futsch" (gone). We left them and went off to meet our date for the evening-two of the mess cleaners at the barracks, older than us but very affectionate. Frank's let him take her knickers off.

The last half of the course passed quickly. I played in my last ever football match-in goal for the Academic students

against the permanent staff. I don't remember how many I let in, I lost count after twelve. I did an evening's guard duty, notable for the fact that the Guard Commander, a sergeant in the Pay Corps, had no idea what he was supposed to do and stood close to me so that I could murmur the orders which he then shouted. On the next to last evening in Gottingen Frank was on guard so I went into town on my own. I went to the NAAFI Club for a while and then wandered off for a stroll round to see what I could pick up. Suddenly I ran into Alec McAlpine who greeted me like a long lost brother. "Thank God I've met you", he cried. "I promised the girls I'd bring one of my friends to see them but I thought I wasn't going to manage it". "What girls?", I asked he giggled, "I call them my harem, come on, they'll give you a great time!". We had often wondered where he went in the evenings, nobody ever saw him in town and he never said. We walked to a back street and stopped outside what appeared to be a small warehouse with a large roller-shuttered entrance. Mac opened a side door with a key, switched on a light and we entered. The place was filled with large sacks of onions, it reeked of them. He led the way to a wooden stairway which we climbed to a sort of gallery where there were two or three doors. He knocked at one of them, it was quickly opened by a short, stout middle-aged woman who smiled and beckoned us in. It was a large room with a stove, several items of shabby furniture and a bare wooden floor. In it were four of the plainest women I had ever seen gathered together. They greeted us eagerly, Mac took a packet of Players from his pocket and put them on a small table, the least plain of the women embraced and kissed him, whispering something in his ear which made him giggle. "I'm in for a good time to-night", he said and introduced me all round. I can only clearly remember one of his harem, a tall, bespectacled, red-faced woman with blonde hair, wearing a black leather coat and jack-boots. She was positively ugly rather than plain and put me in mind of a Belsen concentration camp guard called Irma Grese who had been hanged the previous year. She smiled as we were introduced and kept hold of my hand. Mac grinned, "Do you fancy Helga?, she fancies you, you'll be all right there!". I had, on one or two occasions, consorted with women and girls who couldn't have been called pretty, one of them had a glass eye. They do not feature in these pages. They were glamorous beside Helga. For

the only time in my life I made an excuse and left. I think I said I had a headache. Mac was annoyed, I was spoiling his evening. None the less I insisted on going and stumbled down the stairs, past the onions into the street.

Mac returned to the billet very late and disappeared immediately after breakfast in the morning. He didn't attend the English class or the farewell lecture in the afternoon. When we returned to our room there was a pencilled note on the table: it read "Sorry I shan't see you all to say goodbye as I have contracted gonorrhoea - all the best - Mac".

I travelled as far as Krefeld with Frank. I was staying there overnight to catch the Medloc train the following day and he was being taken back to his battalion in Army transport. We shook hands and said goodbye, he hesitated and so did I, wondering whether to ask each other's address so as to keep in touch. Neither of us said anything and I have regretted it ever since. We had become good friends in the four weeks we had known each other and I think we might have become lifelong friends as time went on. Perhaps he would have been the close man friend I have never had and have needed so badly during these lonely years since poor Mama died.

Several familiar faces had vanished from 227, all of them in the same 68 group as me. They had gone back to England to be demobbed. If I hadn't been a regular I should have followed them out of the Army. It was a depressing thought. I had only been back in Trieste for a few days when I was sent on leave. Ken Francis was home, having been demobbed from the RAF, and was waiting to go to the Police Training School at Chester-le-Street before joining the Grimsby force. I spent most of the time with him, we drove about in Kitty's car, went to the movies and football matches, I borrowed books from the library. It was the sort of life I could expect to live as a civilian. The only thing I should miss was the easy sex available in Italy and Germany. There were prostitutes in Grimsby, certainly, Pat and Sis at the Railway were typical. They were more attractive than Mac's harem in Gottingen but not all that much and I didn't fancy them. Italy and Germany had spoiled me.

I should eventually have to conform to the conventions of the respectable lower middle class for which my grammar school education qualified me whereby you met girls at school, work

or social functions, took them to the movies or dance halls (in Grimsby the Gaiety in Wintringham Road was considered rather common, the Cafe Dansant near Cleethorpes Bathing Pool was all right) and after the second or third date might be permitted certain favours beyond a good night kiss. Nothing below the waist, though, until you had been going steady for several weeks and certainly no question of full sex before you were firmly engaged or, more likely, married. I have sometimes wondered why this differed so much from the American Army's experience of English girls and put it down to two things—it only applied to Americans and there was a war on. Once the war was over and the Yanks went home everything reverted to normal: sex included.

Large numbers of my contemporaries' lives were ruined by these conventions. Couples got married because they lusted after each other then found after a few months, when the novelty began to wear off, that they had nothing else in common. Frequently, however the bride soon became pregnant (if she wasn't pregnant already, a common cause of marriage) thanks to the unreliable methods of birth control practised, which gave them a new interest in life and kept the marriage going. It would be wrong to call them happy or successful marriages, however, and a lot of couples stayed together simply because they were legally bound. Divorce was difficult, expensive and almost disgraceful. Life is better today in that respect, largely due to more efficient birth control, enabling couples to live together without marriage so that if nothing remains after the first strong sexual attraction wears off they can part amicably.

Back in Trieste I did various jobs as a relief for people going on leave. I was Transport Clerk for a week or two and Sergeants' Mess barman for a while, presumably signifying that I had been forgiven for the dance band fiasco. This meant that I was available to make the number up at all sorts of little treats like lectures by the Chaplain and the Army Educational Corps. One of these was given by the correspondent of an American paper. It was a very good lecture on the subject of Anglo-American relations and, when he had finished, the correspondent asked if there were any questions. The inevitable barrack-room lawyer stood up and asked "What about the racial prejudice against Negroes in the South?". The American then demonstrated how to deal with an awkward question without actually answering it

simply by turning the audience against the questioner."When I was in England during the war, strolling down the country lanes near one of our airfields in Norfolk, I used to see coloured American soldiers arm in arm with local white girls. I didn't like it, and" (he pointed at the audience), "you didn't like it." He got a round of loud applause and cries of agreement. I have used this ploy, suitably modified according to circumstances, many times since. It was, of course, a valid question. Racial prejudice was common in the United States, not only in the Southern states, and most particularly in the American Army which was rigidly segregated. There were no coloured troops in Trieste thanks to a previous commander of the 88th Division, Lieut. General "Court-house" Lee, who had carefully got rid of all coloured units shortly after taking the division over. After retiring from the Army he became head of the Southern Baptist Church.

At last I was given a permanent job in the Investigation Section, which dealt with the sort of minor crimes too trivial for the SIB—something like the uniformed branch as opposed to the CID in the civil police. The section was commanded by Sgt. George Stevens, a Geordie, who was good natured and extremely shrewd. I got on well with him and the other member of the section, Cpl. George O'Connor, a Cockney Irishman. The work was interesting, involving visits to other units to interview miscreants and witnesses, and bars that had been the venue of fights involving British soldiers and, more often, sailors. There was a lot of paperwork and report-writing that I could handle better than the others and I enjoyed driving the section's jeep.

One evening I was called to a bar which had been terrorised by a British marine from a cruiser visiting the port. He had caused some damage before being arrested and taken back to his ship by one of our mobile patrols and I had to meet the bar owner to assess the damage. It wasn't very serious, a few glasses and a chair, and no one had been hurt. After I had recorded the details the barman offered me a drink, which I accepted. There were two or three prostitutes sitting at the tables, one of them a voluptuous blonde lady who smiled and propositioned me. I was all for it until I saw the time—almost midnight. The curfew was strictly applied in Trieste and although I was on duty, I should have had difficulty in explaining away another hour or so. I told her it was too late and that I should see her in the bar

the next evening. She then apologetically asked if I could let her have 500 lire, that she owed the barman; she promised that I would have a good time with her for the other 1000 lire tomorrow. I gave her the money. She was unlikely to welsh on me as she would know that I had ready access to the Vice Squad and could make life very difficult for her. She was very attractive and I looked forward to a pleasant evening. It was not to be; events are stronger than the plans of men, as Bismarck said, long after he left Göttingen in a hurry.

The following evening I was put on special duty. A large number of German POW's had landed at the port from the Middle East and were entraining to be taken back to Germany. We had to guard the train until it left the city. To this day I will swear that we were told to stay with it as far as the Central Station. It was due to leave at 2000 hrs, leaving plenty of time for my assignation with the blonde lady, a third of which I had already paid for. All went well, at 2000 hrs a whistle blew and I climbed up on to the small, railed platform at the end of one of the goods vans in which the Germans were travelling. The train rolled slowly through the town to the Central Station and carried on straight through, beginning to pick up speed as it left the platforms. A horrible thought struck me—I had got it wrong, what the hell was I going to do? I had no idea where the train was going beyond, vaguely, Germany; probably the same route as the Medloc train through Austria—it would probably not stop before the frontier, seventy or eighty miles away. I was going to have to stand, clinging on to the handrail of the platform, which was about two feet square, being shaken from side to side until the train either stopped or slowed down sufficiently for me to jump off. God knew where I might end up. I don't remember being frightened, I was more concerned about getting out of this predicament and concocting a plausible explanation. We rattled steadily along the coast in the premature darkness, caused by large, black thunderclouds which were gathering overhead. Suddenly the lights of a town appeared and the train began to slow down, finally coming to a stop in the station of Monfalcone, the first town over the Trieste border in Italy. I leapt onto the platform, hoping to see several of my comrades doing the same: there were none; I was on my own. I walked up the platform towards the head of the train. Next to the engine was a carriage, the only one in the train. A door opened and a British officer stepped down. I snapped

to attention and saluted, wondering whatever I was going to say. He saved me the trouble, acknowledging my salute with a smile and saying "I suppose this is where you leave us, Corporal?", "Yes sir, that's right.", I replied. It was the absolute truth. "Good night, then", he smiled, as I saluted again, and climbed back into the train which shortly pulled out. I had got away with that piece of deception, the next step might not be so easy. I had crossed the border into Italy, no longer an occupied country. For all I knew the Italian police could arrest me, I might cause an international incident. Before I could collect my thoughts sufficiently to decide what to do I was approached by a Brigadiere (Sergeant) in the Carabinieri. He peered at me and said "Venezia? Anno scorso?" ("Venice, last year?"). I remembered him well, we had spent several hours together on duty in Venice Docks. He had helped me with my colloquial Italian, improving my command of the obscenities. We shook hands and he took me into his office. I explained what had happened, thanking God my Italian was up to it. He commiserated with me and said I had better get back to Trieste as soon as I could. There were no trains or buses before morning and he had no transport. He thought the best thing would be to walk the five miles or so to the border check post at Duino where I should be able to get transport if I wasn't lucky enough to get a lift along the road. He let me use his phone to call the Orderly Sergeant at HQ. He was relieved to hear from me. I explained what had happened and what I intended to do. "All right" he said, "get back as soon as you can, ring up from Duino if there's any trouble." The Brigadiere directed me to the main road to Trieste which was nearby and said he would phone the post at Duino to tell them what was happening, we shook hands and I set off at a smart pace to cover the five miles to the border.

I had not gone far when the threatened thunderstorm broke and it began to pour with rain, there were loud, prolonged claps of thunder and flashes of forked lightning: I was soon soaked to the skin. There was no shelter that I could see and anyway I wanted to get to Duino as soon as I could. As I trudged along I wondered what sort of a reception I should get at HQ. The Orderly Sergeant hadn't said much and I decided to stick to the truth although I didn't think it would be believed. I finally reached the border post, now manned by the Trieste Police. The Brigadiere

had phoned them from Monfalcone and they were expecting me as I entered the post, dripping wet..They gave me a mug of coffee and switched a heater on to help me get dry.It was late on a Saturday evening and there was little traffic.At last a bus full of basketball fans returning from Udine gave me a lift to Piazza Oberdan where I reported to the Orderly Sergeant and told him what had happened.He said "It's funny,nobody noticed you hadn't returned until I checked the armoury and noticed your revolver was still out.I was just going to contact the Orderly Officer when you rang from Monfalcone.No harm done.I should get those wet things off and get to bed if I was you." I looked at the time-it was nearly one o'clock.As I made my way up to bed I remembered the blonde lady who owed me 500 lire, or rather its equivalent, and still does.I saw her again once or twice in the town,we exchanged waves and smiles but I never managed to redeem the debt.Over the years,whenever I have found myself regretting missed opportunities for sex for some reason I regret this one most of all.

The story of my escapade soon got out and I was once again the subject of jokes and witticisms.The popular opinion was that I had fallen asleep.The RSM called me to his office and,after hearing my explanation,asked if this was the case.I pointed out that I had been standing on a platform no more than two feet wide with only a rudimentary handrail at waist height,I had to hang on to it to avoid being thrown off.If I had fallen asleep I should have almost certainly fallen to my death under the wheels of the train.He reluctantly agreed with me and let me go unpunished.Somebody had a record played for me on the British Forces Radio.It was "Honky Tonk Train Blues".

In June I developed an abscess on my left leg which turned septic and I spent a week in 82nd General Hospital,almost next door to our HQ,having penicillin injected into my buttocks every four hours.Apart from the discomfort this caused (the male nurses always managed to do the injection painlessly,the females always hurt),I quite enjoyed it.One morning an announcer of the British Forces Radio came round the ward collecting our requests for the special Hospital programme to be broadcast that afternoon (mine was "Many a New Day" from Oklahoma!).Five minutes before the programme was due to start the Chaplain walked into the

ward and switched the radio off. "We don't want to hear that, do we?", he pronounced. The ward sister, who was also waiting to hear a record, told him what the situation was. "God is more important than cheap music", he said and proceeded to give us a lecture on bible reading, daily prayers and the importance of not doing anything we would be ashamed for our mothers to know about. He couldn't have done more to create several atheists (I was one already) if he had tried. His lecture was heard in sullen silence, there were no questions. When I got back to HQ I asked whether anyone had heard my request. Somebody had - "Yes, I heard it, I knew it was yours, nobody else had ever heard of it!"

In late June Yugoslavia was expelled from the Communist Block for hostility to Russia. It was feared that the Russians would invade the country to install a more favourable regime, as they later did in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The British and American infantry regiments in Trieste were placed on full alert and the police posts on the Yugoslav border were reinforced by the addition of British troops to the Trieste Police. Who better for this important task, to act as a tripwire in case the Russians decided to keep on going, than the Royal Military Police. Shortly after the news was announced I found myself with five others living in a Nissen hut at a checkpoint in the country side religiously standing guard for four hours on and eight off. There was such a post on every road leading out of Trieste. They had been erected just after the war but had ceased to be used by the Army some months before I joined 227. Life was quite pleasant, the weather was warm and sunny, there were ample rations and I had the forethought to take several books to read. About a hundred yards down the road from our barrier was a similar one manned by the Jugs. We didn't see much of them but what we did see was like a glimpse into another world. They wore WW2 German uniforms, except for the curious forage cap which the Serbian troops wear today. You could tell which were the officers because they were the ones who rode push-bikes. They didn't seem to have any motor transport at all; their supplies were delivered by horse and cart. There was no fraternization. After a few days we were replaced by another squad and returned to HQ. This routine lasted until I left Trieste - every fortnight or so I spent three or four days on the border. In the end the Russians left Yugoslavia alone. American possession of nuclear weapons probably

had more to do with it than our own efforts.

About this time I met my first and only Italian girl friend. Her name was Concetta, she was 24 and a widow with an infant son, living in Trieste with her brother and his family. I met her when I visited the American hospital in the course of an investigation. She worked there as a secretary and spoke good American English. She was dark haired, pale, slim and always looked sad; when she smiled it was like the sun coming out on a cloudy day and she was beautiful. She had a trim figure and long, lovely legs. I suspect that she picked me up rather than the other way around. I took her to the movies and invited her to the monthly dance. I liked her company and enjoyed kissing her good night. I was now at something of a loss; I had plenty of sexual experience but it had all been paid for in one way or another, both parties knowing and agreeing to what was to take place. I wasn't sure how to proceed with a girl I liked and respected and didn't want to offend. Her kisses should have told me what was in her mind, however. One evening we went for a walk up the hill towards Opicina, overlooking the city. We sat in a secluded place amidst thick bushes and shrubs and began kissing. I decided it was time I made some sort of a move and rested my hand on her blouse, under which I could feel her breast. Still kissing me she undid the buttons, opened her blouse and loosened the shoulder-straps of her bra. My hand was now resting on the warm, smooth skin of her breast. Very gently I caressed the pointed nipple with my thumb. Withdrawing her lips from mine she pressed my head down to her bosom, almost thrusting her nipple into my mouth. I was just enjoying this when I felt her hand unbuttoning my flies and grasping my erect penis. She giggled, "What is the matter here?", she said and gently drew my foreskin back. I nearly came there and then but managed to control myself as she drew her skirt back, revealing those beautiful legs, and took off her blue nylon knickers. She lay back, drew me on top of her and inserted my penis. I did my best but it was soon over. Too late I remembered I hadn't worn a Durex. I mentally shrugged-she would be subjected to frequent medical checks at the hospital, the Yanks were far more stringent than we were about such things; I went to the ET Centre, however, just to be on the safe side. It never entered my head to wonder about her side of it-the risk of pregnancy. We were together for my last weeks in Trieste and made love several times with increasing success: I never used a contra-

ceptive. I asked her about it and she said there was no need and that it was better without, which was very true. In a lifetime I have only made love to two women without a contraceptive-Concetta was the first.

I had made friends with a sergeant in the Educational Corps when attending a lecture he gave us which he rounded off with a general knowledge contest that I easily won, being the only man present who had heard of the Battle of Bosworth, a Geiger counter and Charles Dickens. He said that the AEC was short staffed in Trieste and suggested that I should apply for a transfer, my School Cert. just qualified me and I should have to do a short course of training at their HQ in Austria, after which I should be promoted to Sergeant, their lowest rank. I liked the sound of this, I had no desire to be a teacher but I thought I should be able to manage it with three stripes on my arm and King's Regulations to back me up. It would beat hell out of the Military Police where I should never get to be a sergeant if I stayed in for the rest of my life. I applied for a transfer and was called for interview by the AEC Area Commander, a major who was very amiable. We had an interesting conversation, complicated by the fact that he thought Wintringham was a public school in Norfolk. At the finish he told me he would recommend me for transfer to the AEC, it would then be up to the Deputy Provost Marshal, Lieut. Colonel Scott-Lowe, to release me. In due course I was called to his presence. I knew him quite well as he was a keen cricketer and I had become scorer to the company team. He was a genial, red faced man who decreed there were to be no ranks on the cricket field and called the team and hangers-on by our Christian names; we had to call him "Skipper". This didn't go unnoticed by the non-cricketers who commented adversely. The word "bumboys" was freely used.

I was careful to be regimental at this interview, dressed with great care, arrived at his office punctually and saluted smartly. He told me to sit down and lit his pipe, telling me to smoke if I wanted to. I lit a cigarette. He read a document on his desk and asked me why I wanted to transfer out of the Military Police. I replied that I realized I wasn't suited to the work of the Corps and was unlikely to be promoted. I had nearly four years still to serve and didn't want to spend it at the bottom of the heap. I felt I was capable of better things and

and the AEC would make more use of my talents. He puffed his pipe as he absorbed this and offered me a cigarette from a pack of Gold Flake which he took out of his desk drawer, I lit it with the stub of the one I had about finished. He asked if I was unhappy in 227 and I replied, truthfully, that it was the best unit I had ever served in. I had made several friends, I liked Trieste and I particularly liked being involved with the cricket team (greaser). I just wanted to make more of myself. He looked pleased at this. "Good!", he said, "just what I wanted to hear. I know what you mean, it's not really the job for someone like you but you must just try a bit harder. I can't recommend your transfer, I'm afraid, we're short of men as it is. Don't forget next Wednesday's match with the South Lancs, I must make sure all the team are available. Remind Alan if you see him". He dismissed me with a cheery wave of his hand. I saluted and left. He had put paid to any hopes of improving my Army career.

I met Alan (Captain Douglas, the second in command and a fast bowler) as I walked in the gate, and gave him the DPM's message. He knew about my interview and asked how I had got on. I told him. He patted me on the shoulder, "Never mind, I think something else will soon turn up". Despite his friendliness I was cast down by this disappointment. I did like Trieste, I was having a good time and enjoying Concetta's favours. I was, however, sick and tired of being at the beck and call of ignorant, semi-literate NCO's and stupid, drunken officers. Capt. Douglas was about the only decent officer we had and he was popularly supposed to be queer. Somehow I would have to get out of the army altogether.

I didn't have long to wait. The following day Frank Rowley called me into the Orderly Room. "I think you ought to read this", he said, handing me a copy of an Army Council Instruction, dated the previous week. It announced that as from 1st August, 1948, the system of "Discharge by Purchase" was to be reinstated. I read it with intense interest. There were various conditions, all of which I met. I was long past my demob date, I wasn't a qualified tradesman and, above all, I could easily afford the £65 it would cost (£1300 today). Frank let me sit at a desk and copy everything relevant into my notebook. That was it. As soon as I got home on leave at the end of August I would buy myself out.

The next few weeks passed quickly. I did another stint on

the border, scored at two or three cricket matches and saw a lot of Concetta. She had begun to talk of finding a place of her own to live where I could visit in the evenings and get to know her little boy. The subject of marriage was never mentioned and she rarely spoke of her former husband, beyond the fact that he had been killed in the war. They both came from the Alto Adige or South Tyrol, an area centred on the city of Bolzano that was ceded to Italy by Austria in 1919 and has been in dispute between the two countries ever since. Most of the people have German as their first language, Concetta's Italian had a German accent. I think her husband may have been in the German Army, not that it bothered me one way or another. I told her that I was going on leave and she said that she hoped to have found a flat by the time I returned. I didn't tell her that I was buying myself out of the Army and would never see her again. I am ashamed of this.

We spent my last evening in Trieste in our favourite spot at Opicina, where we bade each other an affectionate and passionate farewell. She said she would miss me terribly and would count the days until I came back to her. She told me she loved me and I said I loved her. I did not. I am ashamed of this as well.

The following day I said goodbye to my friends and shook hands all round. Frank Rowley told me to be sure to write and let him know how I got on as several others were interested in buying themselves out and I was the first. I distributed various possessions and items of extra kit to cronies and set off on my last journey on the Medloc train. It was 26th August, two years to the day since I had first crossed the Channel to France.

As soon as I got home I wrote a letter to the Under Secretary of State at the War Office applying to buy myself out, carefully conforming to everything in the ACI and enclosing a letter from the bank manager certifying that I had funds available to pay the necessary £65. A few days later I received a reply instructing me to report to the Military Police Depot at Inkerman Barracks, Woking, at the end of my leave, taking civilian clothes and £65 in cash with me. I was not entitled to the demob suit issued to the more honourable individuals who had served their time like men (it didn't actually say this but it was implied). On completion of the formalities I should sever all connection with the Army, not even being placed on Class Z Reserve like the conscripts. It didn't matter, I would have paid a lot more

than £65 to get out and who wanted a demob suit anyway. I wasn't badly off for civvy clothes, Harry had left three suits, two of them almost new, which Aunt Did had altered to fit me; he also left sundry shirts and shoes which fitted quite well. I also had a sports jacket and slacks left over from pre-Army days, the trousers were all right but the jacket was too small; they would do to take to Inkerman Barracks.

Jack was home, wondering what to do next. His exam results qualified him for university entrance but he had been rejected by both Oxford and Cambridge and it was too late to apply anywhere else. Ken was in the Grimsby Police and the three of us spent a lot of time together. I realised that it was going to be difficult to adjust to living at home again. I was not only three years older but had become accustomed to a very different way of life that had changed me considerably and left me with an altered personality and the "other ranks attitude" of a sort of cynical pessimism, summed up by the Army sayings "I see no ships, only fucking hardships" and "Dear Mother: Sell the pig and buy me out. Dear Son: Pig dead. Soldier on". For one thing I had to stop swearing. In Trieste I not only used all the common Army swearwords and, often disgusting, terms and phrases but also the more colourful obscenities we picked up from the Yanks. It was surprisingly easy and I never forgot myself, at home anyway. For all her years at sea and working in pubs, Kitty was strict about bad language, I never heard her use so much as "damn" or "Hell". She even referred to pigs as "Grunters" and rats as "Long-tails".

An article in "Time" magazine reminded me of something Jim Owens had told me. American servicemen were guaranteed a place at University by the "GI Bill of Rights". It was not difficult for British ex-servicemen to join the American forces, the hard bit was getting into America in the first place; not so difficult as it is now but it took time. In those days British subjects were welcomed into Canada, assisted emigration was quite easy. Once in Canada you got a job, any job, and an address. In due course you got a Canadian Social Security number. Then you crossed the border into the USA where there were no restrictions on Canadian immigration, went to the nearest recruiting office and signed up for three years, passing yourself off as a Canadian who had served in the British Army. I began to think of this

as a serious possibility; not the Army, I'd had enough of that, but the US Air Force. If I was successful I would stay in, if not there was the GI Bill of Rights. I might end up at Harvard or Yale. In the meantime I should have to do the best I could in Grimsby until Harry's tangled affairs were sorted out.

My leave ended on 18th September and I travelled to Woking. Inkerman Barracks had been built as a women's prison in the 1860's and had been allocated to the Military Police by someone in the War Office with a sense of humour. You entered through a gateway set in a sort of tower, I am almost sure there was a clock. I reported to the guardroom, also in the tower, and was directed to the Orderly Room where I was expected. I was dealt with by one of the best-known men in the Military Police—Staff Sgt Patience. His fame stemmed from his being the Secretary of the Military Police Old Comrades Association, whose notices and posters were on every notice board throughout the Corps. He relieved me of my £65, giving me a receipt and putting the money in a large safe, which he carefully locked. One of the clerks took me to the spare barrack room, we walked round the perimeter of the huge barrack square and entered one of the three storey blocks. I had been billeted in worse places in the Army but not many. It was the only place I have ever been in that was infested by bats, which flew round the barrack rooms and corridors at night and were thought to keep the flies down. I spent ten days there. Not having boots and gaiters I couldn't do uniformed duties so I was given odd cleaning and gardening jobs to do, spending the evenings at the cinemas of Woking.

On the Saturday I went to London. I wandered about among the crowds in the West End and had a meal in the Corner House. I left it to go to Waterloo. It was quite early, not much after six o'clock, but several prostitutes were hanging about. A tall, fair girl propositioned me, saying she had a room nearby and it would only cost £3, she would give me a good time as things were quiet. I thought of the 1500 lire such an encounter would have cost in Italy, a quarter as much. I had the money and it seemed a long time since I had left Concetta and it might be a longer time still until I had a similar opportunity. We walked to (I think) Berwick Street where she took me to a room over a shop. It was equipped and furnished like a bed-sitter. She was good natured and we chatted amiably. I watched intently as she

undressed; it was the first chance I had to watch an English girl do so and I didn't want to miss anything. As she took her dress off I was struck by the difference between her underwear and that of Italian or German girls. She noticed my fixed stare, struck a pose and giggled. "Blimey!, you're getting an eyeful, haven't you seen a girl in her camiknicks before?". I suddenly remembered where I had - the wedding reception at Rous Lench where I had watched the girls' skirts flare up and wondered why I never got to see their knickers. I spent an agreeable hour with her which improved my opinion of English prostitutes, she even gave me a cup of tea, and accompanied her back to Coventry Street.

As I walked to Waterloo to catch the train back to Woking a nasty thought struck me: where was the ET Centre?. I had used a Durex but you couldn't be too careful. There was a Military Police patrol at the station and I asked them. They hadn't the faintest idea and suggested I go to the RTO's Office where there was some kind of First Aid Post. The medical orderly on duty received me sympathetically. "Nice to see somebody's got some sense, did you use a French letter?, you can't be too careful, there's enough syph and clap going about here to put a regiment of cavalry out of action, horses and all!". This cheered me up no end but at least he went through the usual procedures and gave me a chit to certify that I had attended for treatment.

During the morning of 28th September I was called to the Orderly Room. Staff Sgt. Patience asked me for the receipt for my £65, took it and retrieved the money from the safe, carefully counted it and gave me another receipt. He told me to report to the MI Room for a medical and come back to the Orderly Room at 1400 hrs to collect my papers and hand in my uniform. The CSM, who had been hovering in the background, stopped me as I was leaving and said "Call at the barber's for a haircut, can't let you leave the Army with your hair hanging down your back, can we?. I'll be here at 1400 to see you off". He grinned and I knew exactly what I was in for. I was examined by a medical orderly who asked me if I was all right, checked a urine sample and completed a form stating I was fit and free from infection, something of a relief after my escapade on the Saturday evening. I then went to the barber's and had the worst haircut I have ever had in my life. I could have done better myself without a mirror. The one I had been given at Blackdown as a raw recruit was stylish beside it.

I reported to the Orderly Room at 1400 where the CSM was waiting. "That's better", he grinned, "just right for Civvy Street". I collected my papers and discharge book, handed in my battledress and cap, shook hands with Staff Sgt. Patience, who had been very civil, and walked through the gate and out of the Army. I was less than five miles from Blackdown, where I had joined up and was wearing the same jacket and trousers. I was literally back where I

had started, with nothing to show for it except a wide sexual experience and an embittered outlook. I didn't feel excited or elated, I didn't feel anything: it was a complete anti-climax.

Kitty, Gran and Evelynne made a fuss of me, saying how pleased they were to have me home again. I enjoyed their attentions but began to wonder what I was going to do until I could set off for Canada. For a few days I pottered about with Jack, playing snooker in one of the many billiard halls then in the town and going to the pictures. His father had decided to emigrate to South Africa to start a modern fishing industry and Jack was passing time until they left; from time to time Ken joined us when his duties permitted. I remembered a conversation I had had at the Railway the previous year with one of Harry's friends, a garage proprietor named Tom Ross in which he had told me to see him when I left the Army if I wanted a job. I have always liked cars and fancied a career in the motor trade so I went to his premises in Cleethorpe Road and asked to see him. The receptionist said that Mr. Ross was ill and no longer spent much time at the garage. She made a phone call and directed me to a small office with "T. Ross" on the door. It contained a small, bald man wearing a white coat. He asked what I wanted to see Mr. Ross about and, when I told him I was looking for a job, pursed his lips. "Served your time as a mechanic, have you?", he asked; I said that I hadn't but thought I could do a clerical or perhaps a sales job. He asked what experience I had of either and I made what I could of the bits of clerical work I had done in the Army, which didn't amount to much. He stood up. "I'm sorry", he said, "We've no vacancies at the moment, I should try again when Mr. Ross comes back, if he comes back". As I left the premises I felt a familiar sensation, it was the cold, dead hand of Grimsby taking hold of me—1945 all over again. Tom Ross never did return to his garage and died the following year.

A day or two later I went to the Regal in Freeman Street with Jack, we parted at Pasture Street and I caught the bus to go home. It was almost full and I had to stand. In front of me was a young lady, her back towards me. At the Old Market a number of people got off and she sat down. We recognised each other and smiled—it was Dorothy Drever. She had changed a great deal from the plain, bespectacled little girl I remembered from the First Form, she no longer wore glasses, her hair was stylishly cut in a fringe, she was carefully made up and smartly dressed. We chatted for the few minutes until she alighted in Cromwell Road, just time for her to tell me that she had started teaching at Harold Street School and to hear my recent history. As she left the bus I noticed that she had shapely legs and trim ankles. I wished there had been more time, I might have asked her for a date.

During my second week home I went to the Labour Exchange to register for work. As soon as I said I had just come out of the Army the assistant

gave me a form to fill in detailing my education, Army service and previous jobs, directing me to a nearby table to complete it. When I returned it to him he said I had to see the Resettlement Officer and directed me to his office on the first floor. The RO asked me to sit down, gave me a cigarette and read the form. He raised his eyes and asked "What do you want to do?". For a moment I was dumbstruck, I didn't know what to say, I could hardly tell him I wanted to, join the US Air Force and then go to Harvard. I said "journalism": it was the first thing that came into my head. He nodded, "All right, let's see what we can do". He then made a phone call to the Editor of the "Evening Telegraph", with whom he was evidently on familiar terms. When he had finished he wrote something on my form and a small green card, which he gave me. I recognised it from 1945, it was an Introduction Card which all job applicants had to have under the wartime Direction of Labour order which was still in force. "You've got an interview at the Telegraph at three this afternoon, don't be late. I know him well; his bark's worse than his bite. Whatever you do don't try to flannel him. Know what I mean?", I nodded, after over three years in the British Army I was an expert in flanneling, we all were. He asked me to let him know the outcome and I left.

The Editor was a grey-haired Scotsman who read my form, asking questions about its details. When he had finished he asked why I hadn't gone in for journalism when I left school at the age of 17 in 1944. I explained about wanting to make a career in the Services before the war ended and being unlucky in my choices at Otley and in the Army. He looked at me. "Tell me", he said, "whoever decided you should be a Military Policeman?". I admitted the unflattering truth—I had volunteered for the Corps simply to get away from 7th ITC and out of the Infantry. If we had been given a recruiting talk about the Catering Corps or the Glider Pilot Regiment I would have volunteered for them just as happily. He sighed and then told me to go home, write a 500-word article about Trieste and bring it to his secretary at the same time on the following day.

As soon as I got home I sat down and began to write. It wasn't difficult, it was little **more** than a month since I had left the place.. I put in as much as I could remember about the history and politics of the area, mentally thanking the AEC, one of whose lectures had been given by the British Consul on that

very subject. By the time I finished it was late in the evening and I had re-written it twice. I gave it to the Editor's secretary the following afternoon, she told me to wait in the corridor returning after a few minutes to call me in to the Editor's office. He read what I had written, asking questions as he went along. He looked at me with a frown. "It's not bad, not bad at all and I'll tell you something, it's the first such thing I've read for a long time without a single spelling mistake. The trouble is you're too old; if you were 16 I'd take you on, as it is I can't afford you. Have you anything else in view?, any other interviews?". I told him about my idea of going to Canada and America to join the US Air Force. "Best thing you could do", he replied. "I've worked in the States and Canada, I often wish I'd stayed. There's nothing for you here in Grimsby, you've no qualifications or useful experience, your time in the Army was a complete waste. Don't misunderstand me, you'll get something eventually but it won't be much. Go to Canada as soon as you can, you might easily find something better than the US Air Force. Go to the West, Edmonton, Vancouver, somewhere like that. They can say what they like, this country's finished, God knows where we shall end up". He stood up and we shook hands. He wished me luck as I left.

I walked next door to the Labour Exchange and asked to see the Resettlement Officer, he can't have had much to do as I was told to go straight up. I told him about my interview at the "Telegraph" and that I had been rejected as I was too old. "I was afraid of that", he replied, taking the form and green card and writing something on them. He read through the form again and then said "You'd better go downstairs and see what they've got. It's quiet at the moment but you'll soon get something. Sorry I couldn't help you, good day". I felt like saying something insulting about a grateful country's treatment of its ex-soldiers but kept my mouth shut; it wasn't his fault, it was mine for making such a mess of things. I went back to the counter and told the assistant what the RO had said. He asked what my trade was, I said "infantryman and military policeman". He asked what I had done before I had joined the Army. I told him. "Did you say you had School Certificate?", right!, I'll put you down as a clerk. I'm afraid there's nothing in that line at the moment, come in next week and bring this card with you." He copied

my particulars on to another green card and gave it to me. I asked if I was entitled to unemployment benefit—the dole. He looked at my discharge book. "No, I'm afraid not for three months. You bought yourself out, it's the same as if you'd left a job without being sacked, deliberately making yourself unemployed. You can apply for National Assistance, though, if you're destitute". He returned my discharge book and I went home.

I suppose I was disappointed by these rejections, I had got the impression from the English papers we saw in Trieste that the country was crying out for manpower to produce goods for export to stave off national bankruptcy that had only just been avoided by borrowing huge sums from America. The trouble was, of course, the vacant jobs were in the coal mines, steelworks, shipyards, car factories and textile mills, none of them represented in Grimsby. Some mysterious chemical factories were being built on the Humber Bank but were not yet recruiting. Ken and Jack were all right, Ken was settled in the police force and, whatever happened in South Africa, Jack's Higher School Certificate guaranteed him a place at university. I even began to wonder if I would have done better to have stayed in the Army. Life in Trieste hadn't been so bad, there were a lot of compensations for being at the bottom of the heap, not least of them my affair with Concetta. I wrote to Frank Rowley, telling him about my experiences but giving the impression that I was too busy enjoying myself in Civvy Street to bother about getting a job for a while.

My experience on returning to civilian life was not uncommon, many of my contemporaries were in the same situation. We had missed the war and the privileges awarded to those who had taken part, many of whom returned to good jobs which had been, quite rightly, kept open for them. We were considered to have had a good time abroad at the taxpayers' expense while the civil population endured the austerity of the immediate post-war years. A lot of us had even managed to miss the terrible winter of 1947. Even those, like Ken, who had never left England had pigged themselves on Service food while the civvies had to make do with rations shorter than they had been during the war. By the time we got out of the Forces all the good jobs had gone. The sensible ones, like Jack, who had passed their exams could go to university if they could get a grant (not easy) or if their parents could afford it. As for the silly buggers like me who

had volunteered before making sure they had a job to come back to-forget it. There was no GI Bill of Rights in Great Britain.

One evening in mid-October I went to a concert organised by the Baptist Tabernacle, Ken's family being prominent members. I went on my own as Jack was away playing golf. Ken was the star of the show, doing a turn as stand-up comedian, ending with him singing "Balling the Jack" and doing a little dance in front of a chorus line of Baptist young ladies in decorous blouses and skirts. It wasn't really my sort of thing but I had endured worse. When it was over I stood by the exit waiting for Ken. Among the audience, slowly moving along the gangway, was Dorothy Drever, accompanied by one of the Baptist ladies. She smiled when she saw me and stopped to chat. After a few pleasantries I asked her if she would like to go to the pictures and we arranged to meet in the Old Market Place on the Sunday evening at six o'clock.

I arrived at our meeting place five minutes early and smoked a cigarette, at six fifteen I lit another. As I stamped it out at six twenty five I decided to wait five more minutes and then clear off. She hurried round the corner at six twenty eight, full of apologies and out of breath. I made light of it as we walked to the Gaumont in Victoria Street. She was wearing a fur coat which she called Oscar, and looked lovely; for the first time I noticed that she had green eyes and a voluptuous figure. I wish I could remember which film we saw, I offered her a cigarette and she coughed her way through it-the first of only two I ever knew her to smoke. As we left the cinema she slipped on the step and nearly fell, giving me the opportunity to put my arm round her and keep it there. As we walked along Victoria Street we found we had a lot to talk about and a lot in common. As we passed through the Bull Ring it began to rain and we sheltered in a shop doorway. In a break in the conversation I drew her close and we kissed for the first time. The rain stopped and we walked to her home in Haycroft Street where she invited me in for a cup of tea. Her parents made me welcome and remembered me from school-days. They also remembered Harry. I stayed for half an hour or so and we made a date for the following evening before kissing good night.

It wasn't quite love at first sight but not far off. By the following weekend I realised that I had fallen love with Dorothy Drever. I told her my feelings the following Monday. We had arranged to meet in Pasture Street, on the corner of Burgess Street after she had left a meeting she had been talked into by her Baptist colleague in their nearby premises. As usual I arrived punctually and was not surprised that she was late. After about twenty minutes she came running towards me, crying, and embraced me; she had gone to the wrong corner. "I thought you hadn't turned up", she sobbed. I hugged her, "It's all right, I've turned up, I always will". And I always did.

We declared our love for each other on that corner in Pasture Street and stayed that way for the rest of our lives in spite of everything.

This ends Book One of these memoirs, everything changed from then on. I was no longer on my own. "I" became "we".

Dorothy's parents were William Geddes (Bill) and Alice Drever (nee Rhodes). Bill's parents were both Scottish and came from Westray in the Orkneys. His father had been in service as a coachman and the family had moved about, Bill being born at Nelson in Lancashire in 1899. He had two sisters—Bella and Muriel and three brothers—Peter, Jimmy and Ted. Peter emigrated to Canada before WW1, returning with the Canadian Cavalry Division in 1915, spending most of the war in France. After the war Peter returned to Canada, being joined by Jimmy and Ted during the early twenties. They all settled in the United States, Peter seems to have been the most successful, owning a livery stable and riding school in Watertown, New York. He died relatively young during WW2. I have no idea what Ted and Jimmy did for a living or where they settled beyond an impression that they also lived in either New York State or Connecticut. I met them both in the seventies, they had both married and raised families and had done far better than they would have done in Grimsby. Both had become American citizens and said they had never regretted leaving England.

I know almost nothing about Bill's sisters Bella and Muriel. Like Bill they stayed in Grimsby, Bella married well and joined the respectable lower middle class, Muriel seems to have spent her adult life in the Orwell Street area of the town, demolished long ago. I did meet Bella once but remember nothing about her apart from her being a severe, dark-haired woman. I remember Muriel well although I only met her once when she must have been in her late fifties. She was a fat, shapeless woman, shabbily dressed in dirty clothes. Her eyes were bloodshot and watery and her speech was indistinct, probably because she had neglected to insert her false teeth.

Bill grew up in the Albion Street district and went to Holme Hill School. The area was one of the worst slums in the town and was cleared and built over in the sixties and seventies although the school still exists. He and his brothers seem to have been typical lads of the neighbourhood, well able to look after themselves. None of them did well at school and left as soon as they could. Their father worked as a carter on the docks, driving a "rully" and looking after the horses in their stables. His wages cannot have been very great and, with six children to bring up, they must have lived in poverty.

I have no idea what Bill did when he left school, he would almost certainly have been able to find work after war broke out in August, 1914 and large numbers of young men went away, leaving a labour shortage to be filled by women and under-age boys together with men who were unfit for service or unmoved by the appeals to patriotism made by people who were not themselves going to face the enemy. It is sad to reflect that there was no conscription in Britain until 1916, by which time tens of thousands of volunteers had been

killed in the terrible battles and trench fighting in France, Flanders and Gallipoli. The best and bravest went first and got killed first. Bill joined the Army in 1917 and served in the West Yorkshires. He was sent to France in 1918, taking part in the fighting in Picardy. He was taken prisoner near Cambrai in the August and spent the last few months of the war in a German prisoner of war camp.

Bill joined his father in the carter's trade after being demobbed in 1919, supplementing his small wages by working in the evenings as a bouncer at the local Oxford Dance Hall. Jimmy assisted him until he got into trouble with the police over failing to pay maintenance to a young lady he had failed to marry when expected to. He spent a few weeks in Hull Prison and departed for the United States shortly after being released.

Alice was born on 3rd October, 1900, her parents were Joseph Henry and Mary Jane Rhodes (nee Rowe). Their address on the marriage certificate was 132 Hamilton Street, in the same New Clee district of Grimsby as Kitty. Alice had no brothers or sisters surviving beyond infancy. Her father was a plumber by trade and probably brought home a steady wage. She went to St. John's school where she did well but didn't go on to higher education. She married her first husband, Charles Baden Powell Mason (he was born on 14th March, 1900, while Mafeking was besieged by the Boers) at St. Andrews church on October 6th, 1918. There is something of a mystery about Charlie Mason. He is described on the marriage certificate as a soldier and there is a photograph of him in army uniform. He was, however, serving on HMS Hampshire on 5th June, 1916 when it struck a mine and sank on a voyage to Russia, carrying Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, who was drowned with most of the ship's complement, Charlie being one of the few survivors. He was not old enough to have been in the Army at that time and may have been a boy entrant in the Navy.

Alice gave birth to a son, Charles Henry Harold, on 5th June, 1924, who died in early infancy; she told me that his coffin was so small it was laid out on the sideboard. Charlie had become a fisherman after leaving the Army and was lost at sea in early 1925.

The loss of both her son and her husband within such a short space of time hit Alice hard and for the best part of a year she was in mourning. She started going out with her friends towards the end of 1925, met Bill Drever and they began courting. She became pregnant in January, 1926, and they were married on 24th April at St. John's church; Bill was working as a carter earning £2-50 per week. Dorothy was born at Nunsthorpe Maternity Hospital on 6th October

Even in 1926 £2-50 was only just a living wage and they must have had difficulty in managing, particularly after their second daughter was born in April, 1929. She was christened Edwina but soon acquired the name Tiny which she retained for the rest of her life; nobody, family, friends or colleagues, ever used her correct name. They were a close, loving family; Alice devoted herself

to keeping up the highest standard of living she could manage on their limited funds and Bill picked up odd shillings by doing odd jobs and repairing bikes. He was never academic but in a better world he would have been apprenticed to a trade which would have developed his manual skills and enabled him to earn a better living, perhaps even to go into business; he had a native acumen which would have helped him.

Alice's ambitions to improve their lot led them to move house frequently, much easier in the rented houses of the twenties and thirties than it is now, particularly for respectable families who looked after their homes and paid the rent on time. They seem to have lived all over Grimsby, ranging from New Clee to the West Marsh to the East Marsh to Nunsthorpe. Bill gave up his job as a carter and became a docker in the hope of earning more money. This was certainly possible but had the drawback that it was casual labour—jobs were allocated daily and there was no security; if you weren't picked for work you didn't get paid that day. As time went on, however, Bill got a reputation for being a good worker which meant that the overseers would pick him regularly. Even so, because of the fluctuations of trade during the depression of the Thirties, there were many occasions when there was no work to be had. Somehow the little family kept going, Alice working miracles to keep the girls clean and well dressed and to keep their many houses neat and spotless. Her efforts to keep up a high standard were not well received by Bill's family who thought she was getting above herself. Her parents helped them financially, her father died in the Thirties and her mother became the partner of Alfred Holman who was educated at Dulwich College, had some savings and a good pension, which enabled them to live comfortably at Waltham.

Dorothy had a happy childhood, the difficulties Bill and Alice faced were never allowed to affect their daughters who were always well nourished and well dressed. She became ill with meningitis in the early Thirties, the doctor told Alice that she ought to be in hospital as she was very poorly. Alice refused, saying that if she was going to die she could die at home, shortly afterwards she took a turn for the better and recovered. Thirty years later she told our doctor about this illness and he said that she probably didn't have meningitis at all. The state of medical science in the Thirties was such that the disease was almost invariably fatal, the doctor had probably made a wrong diagnosis, much less likely with modern techniques. He was a nice man and a good doctor: I wish I could endorse his faith in the ability of his medical colleagues.

Dorothy was a clever little girl and did well at the various schools she attended, she spent the two years before taking the scholarship exam at

South Parade Juniors, one of the best primary schools in the town, where the children considered to be scholarship material were carefully coached. She sat the exam in the Spring of 1938 and passed. This went down like a lead balloon with the Drever family, Alice would put on even more airs now that her elder daughter was going to College (not then commonly called Wintringham) which none of her cousins did. The expense involved in her move to the Grammar School was heavily subsidised by her Nanna and Grandad Holman. She was better dressed than most of us in 1B and showed no signs of what must have been straitened circumstances at home. The family lived in Holles Street (demolished in the Seventies to make way for an Asda supermarket) at that time and I remember Dorothy and her mother standing in the front doorway of their house as I cycled past one day; Alice took note of my appearance, being the son of the landlord of the Lincoln Arms, and wondered what I was doing in their street. Actually I was going to call for a schoolmate several doors away; his parents kept chickens in the living room.

Bill had joined the Territorial Army in the late thirties, along with several of his workmates, largely because the pay made a useful addition to their income. When war broke out in September, 1939, they were mobilised and Bill spent the next six years in the Royal Artillery. For several weeks Alice had no income because of the Army's delay in paying her allowances. Once again Nanna and Grandad Holman kept the family going and I am almost certain that Alice had to give the Holles Street house up and move in with them in a house in the Little Coates area. Dorothy felt that the start of the war marked the end of the warm, happy family life that she had known. Alice missed Bill and was terrified of air raids long before any had taken place. I am not clear how it came about but they were invited to live with either friends or distant relatives in the village of Crofton in the West Yorkshire coalfield, about four miles south of Wakefield. Their hosts were Tommy and Amanda Pedley, Tommy worked down the local pit and was earning good wages, Their house was a typical terrace house and must have been crowded by the addition of Alice and her two daughters. The nearest grammar school was in Wakefield but under the local government system of the time, Wakefield being a county borough, Dorothy was directed to Hemsworth Grammar School, over twice as far away. This took some time to arrange and she missed several weeks schooling. Dorothy hated the place; whenever I complained about Wintringham she always said that it was far superior to Hemsworth. For some obscure reason the curriculum included Esperanto which she wrestled with for the four terms she spent at the school. In later years all she could remember was "Tigro, Tigro, brile brulas in arboro nokt obscuras".. In the Summer of 1942 Alice decided that the danger of air raids had passed and moved them back to Grimsby to live at 150 Haycroft

Street. She spent the rest of her life there. Dorothy returned to Wintringham and was put straight into the fifth form. She was at a great disadvantage as she had completed the third year for a second time at Hemsworth and had never been in a fourth form at all. Predictably she failed School Certificate and left school at the end of the Summer term, 1943, to work as an assistant at the Public Library, or rather what was left of it after the air raids of June and July.

Her wages, such as they were, must have been a welcome addition to Alice's housekeeping money, also supplemented by the income from taking in lodgers. This was a wartime growth industry arising from the movement of war workers around the country repairing and rebuilding bombed buildings and building airfields. Along with other respectable young ladies in local government, coming from good homes, she was recruited to work in the canteen of the American Red Cross in the Old Market Place. The doughnuts, hamburgers, ice cream and Chock Full o' Nuts bars made an acceptable change from the dreary wartime rations and she put on a lot of weight. I remember seeing her on odd occasions at the Library and thinking that she made Rita Hayworth look like a skinny, underfed boy.

Bill had a good war. He never rose above the rank of Gunner or went abroad, spending most of the time on gunsites in Wales and the Orkneys, usually being involved with motor bikes and trucks. The unit stayed together throughout the war and he enjoyed the comradeship and relative freedom of Army life. Alice missed him desperately and hoped he would get a medical discharge, enabling him to return home, go back to work on the docks where the dockers were earning good money and help her with the responsibility of bringing up their daughters and running the home. He never managed it: I doubt whether he tried very hard.

Dorothy liked working at the Library, she felt, however that she wanted to do better in life and decided to become a schoolteacher. She was interviewed by the Director of Education who accepted her for training, subject to her passing School Certificate. He arranged for her to return to Wintringham at the start of the Autumn term, 1944 to spend another year in the fifth form, successfully sitting the exam in the Summer term, 1945. She spent the next year as a trainee teacher at Macaulay Street and Weelsby Street schools, being accepted for training at Avery Hill Training College at Eltham in South East London.

Because of his age and long service Bill was one of the first to be demobbed in the Autumn of 1945, Alice and the girls were overjoyed. At last things would get back to normal and they could resume the happy family life they had enjoyed before the war: they were wrong. To men like Bill and his comrades who had been born and brought up in slums and had done hard manual work life in the Army was as good as a holiday. They got three square meals a day, reveille at 0630 meant that most of them were getting a lie in and their Army pay was theirs to spend as they pleased, their wives and children getting an allowance from the War Office. Bill liked the rough and ready camaraderie of the barrack-room and the frequent visits to the wet canteen and the local pubs. He went back to work on the docks which were busy and, thanks to wartime improvements in pay and conditions, provided a steady, much improved income. He spent a lot of it in the Gunners Club with his Army friends, most of whom had returned to Grimsby with him, and often returned home the worse for drink. There is another aspect of Bill and Alice's relationship which must be mentioned. During his Army service Bill had been in hospital with urinary problems, principally involving kidney stones, and had at least one major operation. One of the effects of the illness and its treatment was to render him impotent. Alice was a normal, healthy woman, approaching the menopause, who had looked forward to resuming regular sexual relations when Bill returned home: his inability to satisfy her needs must have been a constant source of trouble between them. She had always been temperamental and hot tempered, Dorothy and Tiny both suffered from her outbursts particularly as they grew up and had ideas and opinions which differed from hers.

Tiny had left the village school at Crofton in 1943 and, on returning to Grimsby, got a job as a shopgirl at Woolworth's store, at that time in Freeman Street. She was bright and intelligent but non-academic and hadn't Dorothy's determination and capacity for hard, sustained study. By the time I met her she was lively, vivacious and attractive to men. She had a trim figure and long, beautiful legs. She had, however, inherited the Drever Roman nose to the extent that it was a disfigurement. Today she would undergo plastic surgery but in the late forties such things were unheard of for ordinary people. Dorothy always said that she wished she had a small, straight nose even though she only had a modified version. Tiny had a boy friend, Alan Chapman, who had been a classmate of Dorothy's in her last year at Wintringham and was in the Navy on National Service.

The Autumn of 1948 passed pleasantly. Jack's father decided to set up a fishing industry in South Africa, sold their house in Weelsby Road and the family emigrated. Jack gave me the framed map of Lincolnshire which hangs on the back bedroom wall as a memento and sold me his bike, a Dawes racer. This was a great boon as petrol was severely rationed and Kitty had sold

my old bike while I was in the Army. My 21st birthday fell at half term so I took Dorothy on a day out to Leeds, our first such outing together. The city hadn't changed much since I had last visited it and I was able to show her round, regaling her with stories of my days at Otley.

Our relationship progressed conventionally, we saw each other every day, we went to the movies frequently, to the Gaiety dance hall when one of the big name bands was playing, we walked for miles. We always had a lot to talk about, we were close friends as well as lovers. Considering we had both been away from home, had other relationships and were strongly attracted to each other it is a wonder we managed to avoid a full sexual relationship but we did. Almost from the start it was implicit that we should eventually marry without anything being said. Apart from anything else I hadn't found a job and had no income. Harry's estate was still being untangled and I had to rely on Kitty subsidising me from the bagful of notes she had brought from the Railway. I went to the Labour Exchange for a while without success and gave it up as a bad job—it seemed pointless until I qualified for the dole. I answered job vacancies advertised in the "Telegraph" and even put an ad in the "Employment Wanted" section: I didn't get a single reply. I saw a notice in the Library advertising the "Regular Forces Employment Agency", with an address at Lincoln. I made an appointment and travelled to the city on the train with Ken, who had a day off. I was interviewed by an elderly ex-officer who told me there wasn't much doing at the moment unless I was interested in picking watercress at the Healing Cress Beds. I wasn't, so that was the end of that.

Eventually, early in the New Year, 1949, a former comrade of Bill's, now an insurance agent, got me an interview for a vacancy and I became an agent for the Refuge Assurance Company. In those days virtually every working class family was visited weekly by one or other of the various "Industrial Life" companies, the Refuge being one of the biggest. Each agent had his own round, known as a "Book" and collected the weekly premiums in cash, going from door to door. The amounts involved were very small, some as little as 6d (2½p), most about 2/6d (12½p). My book was in part of the New Clee area, south of Cleethorpe Road, extending into Cleethorpes across the Park Street boundary. I was taken round by one of the inspectors, a man called Tommy Hamill from Bradford. He had been an agent and inspector for many years and knew the job backwards. He lived in Sussex Street and was intimately familiar with the area, knowing most of the people by name. Collecting was done every day except Thursday and Sunday. In most cases Tommy banged on the front door, opened it if possible and shouted "Refuge!" at the top of his voice. The lady of the house would appear with the payment books and the week's money, which he took, recording the payment and usually having a conversation with her. Sometimes he just opened the front door without shouting and collected the payment from under

the doormat. This carried on at most of the houses in the back streets of a district which had gone down in the world and has long since been demolished and built over. I was appalled. A different character might have enjoyed meeting new people and having regular contact with them, repeating the same platitudes over and over again: it was not for me. On the Friday Tommy took me to his house during the morning for a cup of tea with his wife. When we were settled and he was smoking one of my cigarettes he said "It's no good, is it?". I knew what he meant, I wouldn't make an insurance agent in a hundred years. "Don't worry about it", he said, "pack it in. Come to the office on Monday morning and I'll sort everything out". His wife was sympathetic and said that their son, who was an accountant, had never fancied insurance. "Why don't you write to that new factory that's been built at Pyewipe?. Our neighbour's son wrote in but he's only 17 and they won't take anybody who hasn't done National Service, you've been in the Army so you should stand a chance." None of us knew the name of the firm or anything about it beyond the fact that it made chemicals that had something to do with paint. Mrs. Hamill said she would see her neighbour that evening and get the address to write to. The following day when I met Tommy to do the Saturday morning round he handed me a piece of paper on which was written "British Titan Products Co. Ltd., Pyewipe, Grimsby.

I resigned from the Refuge with no regrets, thanking Tommy Hamill for his help and, with Dorothy's assistance, wrote a letter applying for work at the new factory, making the most of my modest achievements. A few days later a letter arrived saying there was a vacancy for a junior clerk in the Records Office for which I seemed suitable and inviting me to attend for interview the following week. I duly cycled over the Tip at the end of Gilbey Road (properly called Cleveland Bridge), built to carry the trams over the railway sidings, and for the first time cast eyes on the huge factory which was going to have an increasing effect on the next 21 years of my life. I knew next to nothing about the company or its products and processes although I had managed to find out that it made pigment that was used in the manufacture of paint. I was interviewed by the Works Manager, Mr. William Coates, who explained that the factory was due to go into production the following week and dealt with me in a kind, civilised way, asking the usual questions about my education and eliciting the fact that I had failed in Maths and General Science, both of which would be useful in the work of the Records Office. I was beginning to expect a quick termination to the interview when he moved on to my Army service, asking why the Army had decided to make me a Military Policeman. I explained this as well as I could, explaining its advantages. We spent

the next half hour talking about Italy, which he had visited before the war and was looking forward to visiting again: he was particularly interested in my time in Venice, a city he knew well. He looked at his watch, stood up and said he would let me know the outcome as soon as possible. That evening I told Dorothy about the interview, saying that Mr. Coates seemed a very nice, cultivated man. I didn't know it, but he was probably the only senior manager in the company at the time who would have even considered me for such a job without School Cert Maths and Science passes, which would have been specified if the job had been advertised. Less than a week later I got a Letter offering me the position of junior clerk in the Records Office at a salary of £260 per annum-£5 per week.

Dorothy was overjoyed at my success in finally getting a suitable job. I got the impression that Alice had hinted that there were jobs available for those that wanted them and didn't think themselves too good to do an honest day's hard graft. Kitty never said much and seemed happy to subsidise me until Harry's estate was finally settled. She would have liked me to follow a career which would have done her credit, one that she could boast about. Once I had failed to become an officer in the Merchant Navy and the Army she realised that this was unlikely unless I married well, preferably the daughter of the successful proprietor of a thriving business which I would eventually inherit. Neither Dorothy or British Titan Products fitted in with this scheme.

Perhaps inevitably, Kitty and Dorothy didn't take to each other from their first meeting. They were both strong characters and each saw the other as an enemy encroaching on her preserves. They were civil enough on the surface but for several years Dorothy would analyse every remark Kitty made to her to find some subtle, hidden insult.

Dorothy was working successfully through her probationary year but was not happy. She had trained to teach junior children in the 7-11 age group but had been offered a post at Harold Girls' School, a Secondary Modern catering for 12-15 year olds. She was compelled to do her probationary year with her home education authority and had no option but to accept their offer. Harold was probably one of the toughest schools in Grimsby at that time, it had been an Elementary School until the 1944 Education

Act changed its title to Secondary Modern without changing it in any other way. It was situated on the southern edge of New Clee and its catchment area included the streets north of Clee-thorpe Road, one of the worst slums in the town, like New Clee demolished long ago. Most of the staff were middle-aged maiden ladies who had been teaching at the school for many years and made it their business to show this young, lively, attractive newcomer from her London training college her place in the school hierarchy. Fortunately the headmistress, Miss Margaret Bush, realised her potential as a competent teacher and encouraged her, helped by the few younger members of the staff who soon became her friends.

About this time Kitty gave the Austin 7 to Frank and Amy Bradley, who had settled in a house in Marsh Lane, Great Coates. They had a daughter, Shelagh, who had been born in November, 1947. Tragically, she was hydrocephalic and had a grossly enlarged head. Kitty loved her and made a lot of her, to my shame it was all I could do to barely acknowledge her existence on my rare visits. She died before the end of the year.

Somebody sold Kitty a nicely polished 1935 Austin 7 "Ruby" saloon whose brakes were almost non-existent; this wasn't so bad as it sounds, however, as the car wouldn't do more than 25 downhill with a following wind. She got rid of it after a few weeks with my help, part exchanging it for a 1934 Riley 9. As it turned out this car was a bargain and never let her down. It had a preselector gear box and was a pleasure to drive. It has become a classic car and would be worth a lot of money today.

I had become a keen supporter of Grimsby Town who were in the old Second Division, having been relegated from the old First Division the previous season. Football was even more popular than it had been before the war, there was no television so the only way you could get to see it was actually to attend the match. Grimsby regularly drew 15,000 spectators to Blundell Park, 90% of them standing, a large proportion in open terracing, for which they paid a shilling or two. I had a season ticket and went to all the first team games and several of the reserves. They played in the old Midland League and often drew gates of 4-5000, more than the first team usually does today. I even queued up all night to buy a ticket for the third round cup-tie against Hull City in January 1949. This was a new departure caused by the great numbers attracted to such games; in the event over 20,000 attended to watch Town lose 3-2.

I reported to the factory at 9 am on 28th February and was conducted to the Records Office, at that time in the main factory building. There I met the Chief Records Clerk-Peter Rowson who had been at the company's Billingham factory before the war, which he had spent in the RAF ground staff. I didn't need introducing to his assistant as we had been contemporaries at school-his name was Harry Abell and he lived in Lancaster Avenue, a couple of streets away from Dorothy. He was considered to be very clever at school and had always been near the top of an "A" form. He had not achieved anything like his full potential, however, as he had a cleft palate which made his speech difficult to understand until you got used to it and virtually incomprehensible over the phone. He had been in the Army, spending two years in East Africa in the REME. He was looking forward to a corrective operation, only possible when he was full grown, to repair the defect which greatly inhibited his social life: he had never had a girl friend. Alice later enlightened me as to his family circumstances. His ostensible parents, Mr and Mrs. Dick Abell, were in fact his grandparents: he was the natural child of their daughter, fathered by a member of the Smith family, known in the West Marsh as "the bastard Smiths".

The first weeks at BTP were puzzling and confusing. Harry Abell took me round the plant, much smaller than it is now, which seemed huge and mysterious, full of unfamiliar smells and strange, sometimes frightening sounds. He explained the process and I gradually acquired a rough idea of the sequence of complex operations required to turn Ilmenite, a kind of black sand into Titanium Dioxide pigment, a fine, white powder used wherever colour was important for the manufacture of paint, textiles, paper and increasingly, plastics. Large quantities of raw materials were used, the main one apart from Ilmenite, being Sulphuric Acid, which was produced in a large acid plant.

The place in those early days was a Safety Officer's nightmare, the Health and Safety at Work Act was many years into the future and many of the practices and methods used would get the plant closed down today. Protective clothing, where it existed at all, was rudimentary. Safety helmets and boots were unheard of, people like Harry and me, whose work took them on the plant, were allowed to buy black twill lab coats which cost 12½ pence and soon became useless rags because of the inevitable

contact with acid in various concentrations. The vast majority of men working in the factory at all levels had been in the Forces and made use of their old uniforms, particularly battle-dress, greatcoats and berets. Military service plus the traditions of the fishing industry caused us to accept the unpleasant conditions and dangers of this unfamiliar factory as quite normal: servicemen and fishermen were expected to face hazards as part of their working lives, it didn't seem strange that it was the same in the chemical industry.

I soon found that Harry Abell and I had interests in common and we soon became friends, this had an unfortunate side-effect. Peter Rowson, our boss, had been to grammar school in Stockton but was completely non-intellectual. He had a broad Teesside accent and his main interests were gardening and what is now called DIY. His jejune conversation laid him wide open to the wit and sarcasm of two would-be sophisticates, and I regret to say that Harry and I took the piss out of him. A stronger character would have soon slapped us down, it wouldn't have been difficult, but Peter allowed the jokes, witticisms and slights, which he well understood, to rankle within.

I soon picked up the work of the office and learned to use the electric desk calculators. I had no difficulty with the elementary maths, chemistry and physics required and quickly began to find my way around the plant where we spent a good deal of time stocktaking, reading meters and collecting and delivering log sheets. I didn't give much thought to any prospects of promotion or making a career with BTP, it was a job paying a regular salary which was above the local average for such work and, combined with Dorothy's salary of £6 per week, would be enough to get married on. It was understood between us that we would get married when I finally got my share of Harry's estate until the executors advanced Kitty £2000 and she, accepting the inevitable, offered to lend me whatever was needed to enable us to marry and set up home. I told Dorothy what she had said that evening and formally asked her to marry me in the back stalls at the Gaumont: she accepted. I asked Bill's consent to the marriage and was received into the bosom of the family. I could never bring myself to call Dorothy's parents "mother" and "father", which was the local custom but settled on "Bill" and, for two or three years, "Mrs. Drever" until she became "Nana"

after Christopher was born.

Dorothy and I now had to make some important decisions which would seriously affect the course of our life together. Miss Bush had told Dorothy in confidence that she was very satisfied with her work and would recommend her acceptance as a fully qualified teacher. She would then have no trouble getting a teaching job anywhere in the English speaking Commonwealth or, with extra training, in the United States. My job at BTP was nothing out of the ordinary, in those pre-computer days clerical jobs in the great commercial centres like London, New York or Toronto were easy to obtain. We would have enough money to set up home wherever we liked. British emigrants were welcomed in the old Dominions and had no difficulty entering the USA. It was a wonderful opportunity for us both.

Alice and Kitty got on well enough together although it was some years before they became close friends. They were roughly contemporary and had been brought up in the same part of the town, finding many mutual acquaintances. They were reconciled to losing their ewe-lambs but were determined that we shouldn't be any further away than they could help and set to work to brainwash us into forgetting any ideas of leaving Grimsby. We should concentrate on our good jobs and start our married life in a nice little house which they would find for us. As I write this it seems incredible that two intelligent, educated young people, both of whom had lived away from home for long periods would take notice of such interference, but we did. I can't explain it beyond the fact that both Alice and Kitty were determined to get their own way, never mind what we wanted. We could have made our own decisions and told them politely what we proposed to do and left them to like it or lump it, but we didn't. It reflects the way we had been brought up - our parents, virtually all middle aged or elderly people, automatically knew better than we did simply because they were older than we were. The fact that we were better educated and, certainly in Dorothy's case, much more intelligent, made no difference. They had been through the school of hard knocks, they had brought us into the world, fed us, clothed us, given us shelter ergo they knew better than we did.

I wish I could describe how we rebelled against the interference and protested to be allowed to follow our own ideas,

almost certainly taking us away from Grimsby: in fact we accepted their ideas without demur. There was, I suppose, some excuse for this—Dorothy felt she was in debt to Bill and Alice, who had subsidised her for the two years she was at Avery Hill, and we both realised that without Kitty's goodwill we might not get the money we needed until Harry's estate was settled. We were in love and just wanted to be together, we were having a good time, let them get on with it. We were spared one of the greatest problems young couples faced—finding somewhere to live. Wartime rent controls had greatly reduced the profitability of rented property and given sitting tenants a strong incentive to stay put. The days of easy mobility from one rented house to another were over.. The only way to get a house was to buy it with a mortgage. There had been little private ~~house~~ building since 1939, a lot of property had been demolished in the air raids, the Labour government concentrated on replacing the stock of council houses which were subject to long waiting-lists. There was a national housing shortage, forcing prices up. Houses that had sold for £450 before the war had trebled in value by 1949. Kitty and Alice went through the estate agents' lists to find us a place in a nice area within easy reach of their homes so they could keep an eye on us without too much trouble. They finally came up with two, one of them in Littlefield Lane I can't remember at all, we settled on a three-bedroomed end of terrace house—29 Chelmsford Avenue. We could have done worse, it was well built and in a good state of repair. We could also have done better, it had an outside lavatory and no garage or parking space. It cost £1300.

Our mothers allowed us to furnish the house ourselves and we spent a Saturday afternoon at Lee's buying the limited range of "Utility" furniture then available.. At first we thought of having a registry office wedding but after one of Dorothy's colleagues gave her a graphic description of one she had attended at the shabby, dirty premises of the Registrar, a man well past retirement age and so deaf that the young couple had to shout the responses we decided to be married at the Parish Church. Dorothy decided against a white wedding to save her parents additional expense, in those days the bride's parents paid for everything.

I had seen little of Ken Francis since meeting Dorothy and asked Alan Chapman to be my best man, Ken was the groomsman.

Jack Moore had returned from South Africa with his family, Tom Moore having failed to establish a Grimsby-type fishing industry in a country without a single fish and chip shop or any other market large enough, or at any rate prosperous enough, to make such an enterprise pay. He was convinced that the Boers would declare a republic and take South Africa out of the Commonwealth, which came to pass and that the blacks would eventually take the country over and would then be ruled by Marxists trained in Soviet Russia, which has taken much longer but is almost there. Jack was working in Hull and couldn't get time off to attend the wedding. The nearest I had to a bachelor night out was to go to Cleethorpes with Ken on the Sunday. We had a drink or two but returned home cold sober.

We got married on Monday, 15th August, 1949, a beautiful Summer day. The ceremony went well, Dorothy looked lovely. The curate officiated, still wearing his cycle clips. There are a few of the wedding photographs in Dorothy's family album. The photographer should have been prosecuted for misrepresentation. I could have taken better pictures with a Box Brownie. In later years Dorothy and I used to look at them when we wanted a laugh.

The reception was at Field House, near Dudley Street, which was being run as a small hotel at that time. I remember craving a cigarette but very little else and we travelled to London on the afternoon train to spend our wedding night at Grosvenor House. I have been frank about my sexual encounters during my time in the army, the adventures of a young soldier, however, are in a different category from the activities of two young people making love for the first time as Dorothy and I were and I don't propose to describe them beyond the fact that they were very satisfactory for both of us.

Our honeymoon proper began the following day, we were flying to Milan en route to Venice. This must have caused a lot of chagrin to the friends and relatives to whom Alice and Kitty retailed the information, with full details. To go to Venice was bad enough but to fly! Ordinary people didn't do such things in those days, only toffs and film stars. Most honeymoons were spent in London or, by the more middle class in Torquay or Bournemouth, Scarborough was also popular. The really adventurous might venture to Paris or Ostend on the boat train or ferry, flying was for the rich and famous not for Alice Drever's daughter and Kitty Gifford's son. They were wasting their money, or rather Harry Gifford's money, and would live to regret it.

We flew from Northolt airfield (not yet Heathrow) on an Alitalia flight, it was the first time for both of us and passed uneventfully. Dorothy said

later that she was terrified but she didn't show it at the time. I don't think I should be very happy to fly across the Alps in a piston engined Savoia Marchetti with an Italian aircrew now. We spent a few hours looking round Milan and caught the train to Venice, arriving in the late evening. Dorothy had never been abroad before and was thrilled by everything she saw. Venice rose to the occasion. It was almost midnight, a fine, warm evening. We travelled to our hotel near San Marco by gondola along the Grand Canal, a large full moon reflected in its waters, even the stench seemed less pungent than usual.

We stayed at the Danielli, one of the foremost hotels in Europe at that time, which would have caused even more adverse comment by Alice and Kitty's friends and relatives (and our colleagues) if any of them had ever heard of the place. Our room overlooked the San Marco Canal with a view of San Giorgio. It was a wonderful time, we went to the Lido and swam in the Adriatic, I showed Dorothy round my old haunts (well, nearly all), including Pensione Seguso, we went to night clubs and enjoyed the food at the Danielli. I wondered if I should see any of the girls I had known in 1947. The bambine puttane had left Venice, there were no Allied soldiers now and things had improved in Italy so they would have been able to become respectable typists, shop assistants, factory hands, wives and mothers in towns far away. I did see one of the professionals from Padova but, thankfully, she didn't see me. I wondered how my former comrades were getting on. I had completely lost touch with them and, in all the years since, have never met or heard from anyone I knew in the army with the exception of Harry Pexman, who lived in Cleethorpes and went to Blundell Park with me in the early Fifties.

The journey back to England was quite interesting, there were thunderstorms in the Alps and the flight was diverted; we watched the black clouds covering the peaks of mountains several hundred feet above us. For a while I wondered whether we should end our married life after such a short time. Dorothy sat with her eyes closed, I assumed she was asleep: she was not, being frightened out of her wits by the imminence of a violent death in the wreckage of our aircraft. In the event we arrived safely but an hour late at Northolt, too late for the evening train to Grimsby and finished our honeymoon where it began, at Grosvenor House. We arrived at 29, Chelmsford Avenue the following afternoon to find Kitty, Alice, Tiny and Ken Francis awaiting us.

So began our marriage. We were in love, enjoyed each others' company and were happy together. We were, however, two very different characters from different backgrounds: Dorothy was used to the lively, family life she had enjoyed not only with her parents and sister but also with a constant flow of friends, relatives and neighbours who made up an extended family. For a long time she missed their company and warm relationships even though she realised that

she had grown away from them. I was not domesticated at all and the Army had given me a strong distaste for all forms of manual work. In those days men were not expected to do housework; this might have made sense when only the husband went out to work, leaving the wife at home to deal with the household tasks but was unfair to a working wife like Dorothy. I gradually got the hang of it but it took time. We would have done better to take a small furnished flat, there were some about and Dorothy's life, and as time went on mine, would have been a lot easier. This wouldn't have fitted in with our mothers' plans to tie us to Grimsby, however.

I learned that there were subjects better left alone in conversation with Dorothy. She was fiercely loyal to her family and wouldn't allow the mildest criticism. I had to be careful in telling her about incidents at work particularly if I made any mention of any of the female staff. She needn't have worried, the girls and women on the office staff at that time were singularly ill-favoured to the extent that the office manager, who had recruited them, was generally believed to have gone out of his way to engage the plainest applicants. I told Dorothy this but she didn't believe me. It was all part of the considerable adjustment and compromise which is essential if two individuals are to become a happily married couple with a strong marriage, as Dorothy and I did over those first years.

Aunt Evelynne died in November, 1949. She had been a semi-invalid for several years and had retired from the Brighowgate Homes while I was in the Army. Dorothy and I had gone to spend the evening at 7, Fannystone Rd. to relieve Kitty. She told us that Evelynne was very ill and she thought she was dying. She and Dorothy assisted Evelynne to the lavatory and I helped them put her back to bed. Kitty was upset and Dorothy took her into the living room with Gran, leaving me alone with Evelynne. After a few minutes she had a fit of coughing, fell back against the pillow, gasped and lay still.

In those days such things as the kiss of life were unheard of, by ordinary people anyway. I couldn't feel her pulse and held a mirror to her lips to see if she was breathing; there was no sign. I went to the living room and told Gran, Kitty and Dorothy that Evelynne was dead. I wish I could be 100% certain that she was. Today she would have been taken to hospital by ambulance days before although it probably wouldn't have made much difference, in 1949 there were no such things as Intensive Care Units and heart failure or coronary thrombosis was almost always fatal even with skilled medical attention. I managed to close her eyes and asked Dorothy, who was doing her best to comfort Gran and Kitty, what we should do next. She thought I had better tell Dr. Hampton, whose evening surgery was still in progress, as he would probably want to come to see the corpse. Kitty wasn't on the phone, the nearest

call box was in Boulevard Avenue. I decided to drive to the surgery in the Riley, meeting Uncle Bert at the gate. I gave him the sad news and left him to mourn with Gran, Kitty and Dorothy.

Dr. Hampton's waiting room was empty, I knocked on the surgery door and he called me in. He was smoking a cigarette, having assumed all the patients had gone, I told him what had happened. He nodded and opened his desk drawer, taking out a pad of forms. "What time did she die?", he asked. Looking at my watch I realised that it was less than half an hour previously, not much more than an hour since we had left home. He completed a form and gave it to me. It was the death certificate showing "Heart failure" as the cause of death. He ushered me out, switching the surgery light off. "Good night" he said. On the way home I stopped and phoned Kettle's, the undertakers. To my relief it was answered by Peter Bradley who worked for them and lived in a flat above their establishment in Cleethorpe Road. I told him that Evelynne had died and asked him what had to be done, adding that the doctor had given me the death certificate. He told me not to worry and that he and a colleague would be along in half an hour or so to attend to everything. He was as good as his word, I was almost relieved when he told me that Aunt Evelynne had, in fact, died about the time on the certificate.

If there is such a thing, Evelynne had a beautiful funeral. It was a crisp, sunny Autumn morning. Kitty, Gran, Bert and I waited for the cortege which was directed by Peter Bradley. We drove slowly along Yarborough Road to St. Michael's church where some representatives of Brighowgate Homes were waiting. After the short service the coffin was carried into the churchyard, followed by the vicar, reading the burial service, and the little group of mourners led by Gran and Bert, and interred. In the distance I could see the factory, its plume of white vapour, almost vertical on such a windless day, standing out against the deep blue sky. Poor Evelynne. She didn't seem to have had much of a life and had been in poor health as long as I could remember. I don't know how close her relationship with Bert had been, Kitty once hinted that it was as close as it could be. I never took her up on it: I hope she was right.

Harry's estate was finally settled in April, 1950. It was divided into three, a third each for Kitty and me and a third put into a widow's trust fund to provide an income for Kitty. With the banknotes from the Railway Kitty was well provided for, particularly after I had paid her back the money she had lent me to pay the deposit on 29, Chelmsford Avenue and to furnish it. I also paid her for Dorothy's engagement ring, a beautiful white sapphire surrounded by small diamonds set in white gold. It had been another of the treasures found by Kitty in Harry's safe and carefully removed.

After the debts were paid I was left with several hundred pounds, not

a fortune but enough to buy a decent car in days when a Standard Vanguard (equivalent to a Mondeo) cost about £600 on the road. New cars were still subject to long waiting lists, those lucky or patient enough to buy one had to sign a covenant preventing them from selling it for two years. This distorted the second-hand market, two year old cars, out of covenant, cost half as much again as they had done new; pre-war cars were still fetching ridiculous prices. I studied the "Cars for Sale" columns in the "Telegraph" and "The Motor" avidly. As might be expected I did not intend to buy a sensible bread and butter 1939 Ford, Austin or Vauxhall, which would have been cheap to run and easy to maintain, not me, I was going to get something out of the ordinary. I soon found it, an American Nash Lafayette 1937 convertible, offered for £250 by Bray Motors in West End Lane, London, NW6.

We travelled on the afternoon of Good Friday and stayed at Grosvenor House. On the Saturday morning Dorothy went shopping with £25 I had given her to buy some new clothes in Oxford Street while I went to inspect the Nash. I got a taxi, not having the faintest idea where West End Lane was, which dropped me outside Bray Motors. The premises were next door to where the Pine Shop is now, there was a car showroom there when we first came to live in West Hampstead, which was converted into shops in the early eighties. I remember nothing of the area at that time, I wish I could. A Hooray Henry car salesman showed me the car. By English standards it was huge, with a bench type seat and a dickey seat in the boot. The maroon paintwork was dull but the bodywork was sound with no sign of rust: the worst feature was the fabric top which was literally rotten and split in several places. This poor first impression was removed when the salesman took me for a drive in it, impressing me with the quietness of the six cylinder engine and the effectiveness of the brakes. I suppose that if I had gone out of my way to find the most unsuitable car for a couple like us with a small income and no garage or parking space, the Nash would have come close to the top of the list. I bought it.

I left the car in a garage in Kilburn and went to meet Dorothy in Leicester Square. She was waiting for me in tears, having left her handbag containing the £25 in a Ladies' toilet. She had returned within two or three minutes and the attendant had denied all knowledge of it, becoming abusive when Dorothy asked if she could look in her cubby-hole. She couldn't remember - clearly where the Ladies' was (there were far more of such places than there are now) and wouldn't let me report the matter to the police. Poor love, she was so upset, not only at losing such a large sum of money (£500 now) but at being so careless and spoiling our little holiday. She cried all afternoon only brightening up when we went to see Vivien Leigh in "Streetcar Named Desire" that evening.

The following morning we used all the petrol coupons to fill the Nash's

At approximately 11.20am yesterday, Monday, 17th February 1997, my Father, Bruce Austin Gifford - the author of these memoirs, died in the Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, London, NW3. He had suffered a heart attack in the early hours of 6th February and I accompanied him to the Royal Free. At first he was diagnosed as having suffered an "unstable angina" but on the following day the Doctor decided that it was another heart attack. At first he was quite ill but then began to improve and by the evening of 16th February seemed much better and was looking forward to coming home.

I arrived at work at the usual time on 17th February expecting to receive a telephone call at some point during the day to advise me when he would be coming home. He had requested that I bring with me some clothes for him to change into. At about 9.10am I received a telephone call from a woman at the Royal Free telling me that he had suffered another heart attack and they thought I might like to come to the Hospital. I said I would come as quickly as possible. I locked up my office and hurried off to Maida Vale where I managed to find a taxi. I don't know how long it took. When I reached the Royal Free I went straight to the Cardiac Care Unit. I noticed that the space previously occupied by my Father's bed had already been taken by another patient.

Like my Father I have a low opinion of the Royal Free and have an even lower opinion of the medical profession in general. They seem to have become dedicated to the Thatcherite dictum of bland double talk which may take in the less intelligent members of the populace but which I can see through as if it were glass. The nurses kept telling me "He's okay. He's okay" and urged me to relax and not to worry. This had an opposite effect on me. I spoke to the doctor, a person named Simon Taggart who seems wasted on the medical profession - he would be better suited to a career in sales and marketing or politics, (the two are closely allied). Of course he wouldn't commit himself but when I asked if I should ring my brother he said that it would be a good idea if my brother made plans to come down during the course of the next twenty four hours.

The telephone system at the Royal Free is a disgrace. I was unable to dial direct and all calls had to be routed through a switchboard. I rang my brother's house - he was not in but I left a message on his answering machine. I managed to contact my sister in law at her place of work - the North Riding Infirmary in Middlesbrough. She said she would contact my brother.

They let me in to see Father. He was wired up to all kinds of machines and was wearing an oxygen mask. He smiled at me and I took his hand. It felt cold. "What a mess" he said "What a bloody mess!" I found it hard to say anything. "I wish I could pee!" He told me - I could see that they had inserted a catheter. At one point he smiled again and said: "Poor old chap! Which is what he used to say to me when I hurt myself as a child. Then he said he was going to be sick. I called the nurses and two came in. They held one of those ugly, grey cardboard bowls under his chin, took off the mask, and tried to manoeuvre himself into a sitting position. I wanted to vomit as well. When he vomitted he brought up blood and one of the nurses advised me to go outside. An Asian doctor came in as I was going.

I paced about in the corridor outside the room then a male nurse took me a little way off and found me a chair. He fetched me a cup of tea and seemed inclined to stay but I told him I would rather be alone. He left me. I saw doctor Taggart approaching along the corridor with a slim, blonde woman and he asked me how things were going. "You'd better get in there!" I answered. "Things don't look good!"

Eventually Taggart and his companion (I almost wrote accomplice) returned and took me off to a seminar room which was not in use. Taggart was muttering about my being right in my assumption and apologised for the cold, clinical surroundings. They sat me down and then sat on either side of me. The woman, I learned she was a consultant ~~K~~cardiologist named Johnson, told me that my Father's condition had deteriorated to the extent that it was "highly unlikely" that he would survive. At this point I started crying and Dr Johnson made a pathetic attempt to comfort me by lightly stroking my left arm. They asked me if I wanted to be with my Father - "it might be distressing." I said that it was only right that I should be with him. They called in a Nurse and departed. The Nurse took me back to Father - en route she told me "he's not going to make it!"

They had removed all the machines and Father was lying with a blanket covering him. His eyes were dilated and he was breathing heavily spittle was coming out of his mouth. I took his hand again. The Nurse left us alone for a few minutes. I told him that I loved him. That I had always modelled myself on him. The nurse - her name was Sarah - came back and asked me if I wanted her to stay. I said yes. She commented that the last breaths sometimes went on for ages. She wiped his mouth. He seemed to stop breathing and I could not see his chest rising and falling. Sarah checked his pulse then gently said: "He's gone!" I started crying again. "He missed my Mother so much!" Was about the only coherent thing I said. I ~~replied~~ let go his hand.

Sarah left me alone again and I sat there trying to think. I couldn't. My mind refused to function. I kissed his forehead and said "Bye bye Dada!" Then started to leave. I turned and looked back when I got to the door. Sarah had closed his eyes. There was nothing more I could say.

I have ~~to~~ decided to leave my Father's memoirs exactly as he has written them for they are his words, not mine, and it would be wrong of me to alter or amend them in any way. I intend to write my own memoirs, eventually, but these volumes are my Father's story and no one else's.

Christopher W. Gifford.
11.15pm 18th February 1997.